AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Francis Ames-Lewis is co-author, with Joanne Wright, of *Drawing in the Italian Renaissance Workshop*, 1983.
R. H. Barnes is the author of *Two Crows Denies It: A history of controversy in Omaha sociology*, 1984.
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Julia Briggs is a Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford.
P. A. Brunt was formerly Camden Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford.
Norman Bryson's most recent book is *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, 1984.
Kathleen Burk is a lecturer in History and Politics at Imperial College, London.
Krzysztof Cieszkowski is Curator of the Library at the Tate Gallery.
John Cottingham is the author of *Rationalism*, which was published last year.
Kerry Downes's recent books include *Rubens*, 1980, and *The Architecture of Wren*, 1982.
A. S. G. Edwards is the editor of *Skelton: The critical heritage*, 1981.
Stephen Fender is Professor of American Studies at the University of Sussex.
C. J. Fuller's *Servants of the Goddess: The priests of a South Indian temple* was published last year.
Carlo Gébler's novel, *The Eleventh Summer*, was published earlier this year.
Colin Gordon is the editor of *Power/Knowledge: Selected writings of Michel Foucault*, 1980.
Richard Grenier's novel *The Marrakesh One-Two* was published last year.
Geoffrey Grigson died on November 20. The concert in a Wiltshire farmhouse was held in September and his poem about it was the last he wrote.
Christopher Hitchens is Washington columnist for the *Nation*.
Peter Kemp's *H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape* was published in 1983.
Keith Jeffery's edition of the military correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was published in July.
Patrick McCarthy is the author of *Camus: A critical study of his life and work*, 1982.
Iain McGilchrist is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and a medical student at the University of Southampton.
Lachlan Mackinnon's *Eliot, Auden, Lowell: Aspects of the Baudelairean inheritance* was published last year.
Peter Metcalf is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia.
Virgil Nemoianu teaches Comparative Literature at the Catholic University of America, Washington.
Edward Pearce is a leader-writer for the *Daily Telegraph*.
Christopher Prendergast is the author of *Balzac: Fiction and melodrama*, 1978.
David Profumo is co-editor, with Graham Swift, of *The Magic Wheel: An anthology of fishing in literature*, which has just been published.
Felicity Rosslyn is a recent winner of the Ivo Andrić prize and a lecturer in English at the University of Lancaster.
Alan Ryan's *Property and Political Theory* was published earlier this year.
E. P. Sanders is the Dean Ireland Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture at the University of Oxford.
Miranda Seymour is working on a life of Henry James.
Colin Seymour-Ure is the author of *The American President: Power and communication*, 1982.
Michael Sullivan's books include *The Arts of China*, which was republished, in its third edition, in 1983.
David Sweetman's collection of poems, *Looking into the Deep End*, was published in 1981.
Bernard Wasserstein is Professor of History at Brandeis University.
Henry Woudhuysen is a lecturer in English at University College, London.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 256

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 3. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.

Entries, marked "Author Author 256" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on January 10.

1 And now, lad, all is over
'Twixt you, your love, and the clover;
So keep a stiff upper lip
And shrink not, lad, nor shiver,
But walk you down to the river
And take your final dip.

2 When lads have done with labour
in Shropshire, we will cry,
'Let's go and kill a neighbour'
and t'other answers 'Aye!'

3 Oh, no, lad, never touch your cap;
It is not my half-crown;
You have it from a better chap
That long ago laid down.

Competition No 252
Winner: D. Lindsay
Answers:

1 In the grammar of Mrs Merdle's verbs . . . there was only one mood, the Imperative; and that mood had only one tense, the Present.
Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, book 2, chapter 12.

2 His favourite tense was
The Present Erotic
And he taught her the demotic
Speech of today,
With his bold airs and graces
He put her through her paces,
They did things and went places –
She was quite carried away.
William Plomer, "The Philhellene".

3 The past and present wilt – I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.
Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself".

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Lady Elizabeth Butler (née Th...): nineteenth-century artist: present whereabouts of oils, watercolours and ..., correspondence and her diaries; for ... and a book.
Geoffrey W. Fielding.
104 St John's Road, Baltimore, Maryland ... USA.

Spanish nationals in the British forces: information sought about Spanish nationals ... with British units during the Second World War; for a book.
Daniel Arasa.
Calle Clot 187, ático 4a, 08027 Barcelona, ...

Warren de la Rue (1815–89), ... astrophotographer and businessman: any original or secndary material about his ... life.
H. J. P. Arnold.
30 5th Avenue, Havant, Hampshire PO9 ...

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A. M. Macfarlane.
Regimental Headquarters, Royal Artillery, ...ment House, Woolwich, London SE18 ...

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Margot Peters.
511 College Street, Lake Mills, Wisconsin ... USA.

Ladies' Companions: personal recollections sought; for a book.
R. E. Watson.
3 Sutherland Gardens, East Sheen, London ... 8DB.

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Hinrich Siefken.
Department of German, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

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The tiger and the lamb

Anthony Burgess

JAROSLAV PELIKAN
Jesus Through the Centuries: His place in the history of culture
270pp. Yale University Press. £15.95.
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"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" came down from Sinai on the tablets of the law, and one rarely hears New York Jews call on Jehovah or Elohim when they stub a toe or cannot find their car-keys. They prefer to swear "Jesus Christ" – no true blasphemy, since they do not accept his divinity. This is a trivial instance of Christ's finding a place in the history of secular culture. If God's name is either too brief or too vocalic (eg Allah) to make a satisfactory oath, "Jesus Christ" comes down to earth with sharp consonant-clusters that suggest violence. It is not too fanciful to find in the very phonemic structure a summation of his character and his destiny.

Jaroslav Pelikan's brief new book, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, states the obvious – that "regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries" – but states it variously and well. He takes eighteen aspects of this figure, eighteen complex responses to his image and his mission, that fit the *Zeitgeist* from the narrowly rabbinical interpretations of first-century Judaism up to the universal, and increasingly non-ecclesiastical, ikon of today, with the born-again chillasts and the Jesus freaks and the wearers of Jesus jeans. Not that Professor Pelikan mentions these latter. There is an austerity in his approach which makes him wary of the more extravagant, and more demotic, cultural manifestations of Christolatry or Christomania. His subtitle promises more than it delivers.

He is not averse to showing what has been made of Christ in modern painting – Siegfried Reinhardt's "Light" and Monika Liu Ho-peh's "The Stilling of the Tempest" – and he touches literature with William Sharp's woodcut "The Grand Inquisitor", but there is disturbing evidence of insufficiency in his secular reading. He quotes T. S. Eliot's paraphrase of Augustine in *The Waste Land* (perhaps the least convincing item in the whole of that collage) but has nothing to say of the tigrine Christ in "Gerontion" (a fine line harmed only by dubious Latinity). His only example of an English "mystical" poet is, God help us, Robert Herrick. He cites the sign of the cross made by drowning Catholics in Nicholas Monsarrat's *The Cruel Sea*, seeming to imply that that was the most significant novel to come out of the Second World War. He appears not to watch television, which has made its own popular contributions to the propagation of Christ's image. He is an erudite theologian who paddles very cautiously in the secular culture which is his avowed subject.

"In the juvescence of the year came Christ the tiger." It is the feral giant of energy, not the meek and mild Dustin Hoffman figure of infantile iconography, that has stamped itself on twenty centuries of history. The Jesus we meet in the gospels is too disturbing and eccentric a personality not to have existed. He is no mushroom and he is no creation of propagandists who, despite their sanctity, clearly had little fictional talent. The best proof of his genius is to be found in his almost casual institution of the Eucharist – a sacrament that still frightens the children of the Reform with its shocking literalness. And the doctrine of the cultivation of love as, so to say, a conscious social technique is still too divinely simple and humanly improbable for the bulk of his followers to take seriously. The Church, in its various fractured forms, has tried to tame and institutionalize a personality too supple to submit to the nets of theology. Ordinary people, ecclesial and lay alike, have proved neither good enough nor intelligent enough (to say nothing of humorous enough) to accommodate themselves to his quality.

The failure in the first century of the Nazarenes, whom the Hellenophone pagans called Christians, to see Jesus in the context of the past as well as the future has had ghastly consequences in our own day. Or at least, thinks Pelikan, the question – "easier to ask than it is to answer, and . . . easier to avoid than it is to ask in the first place" – concerning that early brash unwillingness to synthesize, has to be put:

> Would there have been such anti-Semitism, would there have been so many pogroms, would there have been an Auschwitz, if every Christian church and every Christian home had focused its devotions on icons of Mary not only as Mother of God and Queen of Heaven but as the Jewish maiden and the new Miriam, and on icons of Christ not only as Pantocrator but as *Rabbi Jeshua bar-Joseph*, Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, in the context of the history of a suffering Israel and a suffering humanity?

Post-Nazi Christian guilt has replaced the imputation of Jewish guilt, now expunged from the liturgy of Holy Week, but guilt itself is no answer. The fact that, with a sort of scholarly relief, Pelikan is able to dispose of the Christian problem *vis-à-vis* Judaism in a single rhetorical question and then pass on to the less turbulent waters on which sails, or walks, the Europeanized Christ, is an admission that history is irreversible, and that it is best to face the phenomenon of political evil in another context.

He comes, in good time, to that context, but first the universality of Christ has to be considered in terms of pagan, rather than Judaic, prophecy – in other words, in an over-eager (and thoroughly superstitious) desire to find Christ before Christ existed. He surprisingly quotes Iris Murdoch, though not as a romantic novelist, on Plato, who produced one of "the most memorable images in European philosophy" when he taught that, in creating the universe, the Demiurge split the soul-stuff and made the two halves "cross one another at their centers in the form of the letter Chi". There, to the wonder of Christians, was the cross before Christ was crucified on it: the dead Christ as metonymy, two nailed laths easier to deal with than the unpredictable substance that died upon them. The *Odyssey* too provided an anticipatory image of Christ crucified with Ulysses lashed cruciform to the mast, forced by a kind of religious destiny to suffer the siren song of destruction which his followers, mere men, were not obliged to hear. "The story of Odysseus at the mast became a permanent component of the Gentile 'types of Christ'." There was a kind of comfort in that it enabled the new Christians to find an anticipation of the Saviour in decently cool pagan mythology, not in the tangled wood of Jewish prophecy.

It was Clement of Alexandria who saw a prediction of the *oikonomia* of salvation in the dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon in Book Two of the *Republic*. Glaucon postulates two beings who, unlike the generality of mankind, are respectively wholly righteous and wholly unrighteous. The wholly righteous man might, because of the difficulty on the part of ordinary mixed humanity to interpret an extreme as other than dangerous, seem to the half-righteous to be totally unrighteous. Then comes the prophecy, in Gilbert Murray's translation: "He shall be scourged, tortured, bound, his eyes burnt out, and at last, after suffering every evil, shall be impaled or crucified." So much for the anticipation of the death of Jesus. His birth was taken care of by Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, in which – "iam redit et virgo" – the golden age would return ("nascenti puero") under the dear child of the gods. As for the consummation of all things, the Delphic Sybil had foreseen it and was permitted to go on foreseeing it in requiem masses, until the Second Vatican Council abolished Thomas of Celano's remarkable hymn beginning:

> Dies irae, dies illa,
> Solvet saeclum in favilla,
> Teste David cum Sibylla.

If so much trust could be reposed in the pre-Christian pagans, a little, though grudgingly, could be accorded the pagan who presided over Christ's execution. Pontius Pilate, the patron saint of all writers, with his "Quid est veritas?" and "Quod scripsi scripsi", distractedly established Christ as a king and made possible the concept of the Christian Emperor. With Constantine, Christianity enters the political system which Christ himself, with his usual intelligence and cunning, abjured to the anger of the Zealots. Caesar had his rights, and they were not God's. With the Christian Empire the rights were unified, or confused. The fitting of Jesus into a system of political rule succeeded in rigidifying, or establishmentizing, what was essentially the religion of the outlaw. Theocracies or hagiocracies, like those of Geneva or Massachusetts, identified the principles of Christian conduct with the secular law, and delegated God's punishments – which Christ had reserved to the final harvest – to human functionaries. Christ's entry, probably on a donkey, into the kingdom of politics was an error which only the growth of indifferentism has reversed. It produced pogroms and was remotely responsible for Auschwitz.

But if we have seen, in this century, evil most spectacularly at work in dogmatic political systems (and the dogmatic element may be regarded, even with Nazism and Soviet communism, as a thing learnt from institutionalized Christianity), it is through meditation on Christ's mission that the nature of evil has best been understood. This brings us to St Augustine, who stole pears – not, apparently, apples – because he loved the act of stealing more than the taste of filched fruit, and helped us towards a concept of evil as an innate human capacity for sin in a series of *actes gratuits*. The desire to sin against God for the sake of the sin is seen as an act of diabolic frivolity which can be exculpated only by a divine sacrifice which necessitated the incarnation. This incredible self-abasement of God is to be seen as the

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The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, England

measure of the enormity of sin, which is built into the human make-up. What Pelikan terms a Christian psychology and anthropology were worked out by Augustine, and original sin is the greatest part of the human endowment. Original sin was never easy to accept, and Pelagius and his followers – who include positivists, liberals and Marxists – rejected the imputation of fault to souls incapable of enacting it. But original sin and evil – without their theological justification – were reinstated even by political journalists, who could find no other way to explain Stalin's purges or Hitler's genocide. The word "evil" even appeared in *Time* in a commentary on the My Lai massacre. There are probably very few Pelagians around these days. The last great one, H. G. Wells, died cursing man's stupidity, which he might just as well have called man's sin.

Christ as an entity, as opposed to a personality, was essential to the Augustinian theology, but Augustine could love the Saviour – *talis et qualis redemptor* – and even guardedly rejoice – *O felix culpa* – in the primordial sin because it had forced Christ into the world. Augustine loved, but he could not see what he was loving. To show the lovable Christ was the task of a whole epoch of artists, who, in the true Christian spirit, could dare blasphemy for the sake of a devotion that was not less sacred for being physical. The danger of disobeying the commandment that forbids the making of graven images of the divine was as evident to medieval Christians as it is still to Muslims, who will not permit even the prophet Mohammed to be drawn or painted, much less be represented cinematically by Anthony Quinn. But Christ injected something of his own humanity into the ages that produced the Byzantine and Italian artists. Christ and his mother, as part of the Tuscan landscape or at home in Renaissance architecture, have served art wonderfully. Whether the reverse is true is a question for the theologians.

Without the visual or tactile, and hence lovable, Jesus Christ, a whole era of mysticism might have been impossible. The essence of mysticism is the capacity to experience the intangible as the tangible, to rejoice in the embraces of the divine bridegroom. The sexual imagery of St John of the Cross represents a danger for those who lack the grace to read metaphor with the right piety – I was nearly driven off Gibraltar by the Christian Brothers, who anathematized my setting of "En una noche oscura" as an elocution test for the children they taught – but it may be said that it is of the essence of Christianity to court that danger. God is love and so is his son, who is also a human being. Pelikan has a chapter on the Song of Songs, the most sensual epithalamium ever composed, and the peculiarly equivocal state of mind necessary for its allegorical interpretation. The soul is moved and so are the glands, but the glands too can be consecrated. It may be said that the latency of a poetic content – which means an imaginative and sensuous one – in the image of Christ produced St Francis of Assisi, "the second Christ", in whom some, including Pelikan, see "the rediscovery of the full humanity of Jesus".

Charles Sheeler's "Shaker Barns", 1945; taken from American Paintings, Watercolours, and Drawings from the collection of Rita and Daniel Fraad *by Linda Ayres and Jane Myers (114pp. Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, distributed by the University of Texas Press. Paperback, $12.95. 0 88360 075 7).*

St Francis, to others, has been a dubious figure and even a heretical one. Readers of *Point Counter Point* will remember Denis Burlap's (or John Middleton Murry's) drooling over the Franciscan espousal of the Lady Poverty before giving advice on gramophone shares, and Mark Rampion's (or D. H. Lawrence's) excoriation of St Francis's mawkish life-denial. Where Hilaire Belloc found, in the preaching to the birds and the acceptance of Brother Son and Sister Moon, a return to the blessedness of nature – suitably emasculated, with no earthquakes or volcanic eruptions – others have been ready to condemn St Francis as a dangerous pantheist. The "full humanity" of Christ is not really there – only the self-sacrificial part of it, which some would interpret as masochistic. And what was exemplified in the life and character of the founder of the Franciscans could not be passed on to the Order itself. Father Grandier, tortured by a Franciscan during the Loudun scandal, could appeal to the humanity of St Francis and still have his bones broken.

Pelikan has something to say about the Reformation images of Jesus, particularly the remaking of the Galilean rabbi as the father of the German language and the Prince of Peace as the patron of religious wars. When we have seen Christ transformed from the preacher of unity into the president of discord, blessing opposed factions and, in effect, warring against himself, we may begin to doubt the validity of his message. Or rather to doubt the wisdom of poring over his words and neglecting his personality. For it is in the nature of such a personality to be able to encompass contradictions. Christ as the light of the Enlightenment, as Emerson's "bard of the Holy Ghost", as rationalist, moralist, waver of a political banner – all are legitimate interpretations if we ignore the totality of his real presence in history as a summation of complex humanity. God is by definition a simple substance, but man is not. The major heresy which underlies all others has been the confounding of the twin essences. Oversimplify Christ, and you end up with the wars of religion, the Inquisition and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

The heresy from which the colonizing zeal of the nineteenth-century missionaries in Asia and Africa drew its strength was his refashioning as a European bringing a specifically European enlightenment to the dark places of the world. To a large extent the mission backfired. If Christ meant Europe, Europe did not necessarily mean Christ. Europe meant things more immediately attractive than a doctrine of love – technology and nationalism (another of the banners under which Christ was forced to march). And the imposition of a pseudo-Christian culture meant meeting an indigenous culture half-way. Master Kung has become, thanks to the Latinizing Jesuits, Confucius. Missionaries had to learn outlandish languages before they could translate the Gospels into them, and those languages turned out to be not neutral plastic but agents of distortion. At the same time, plunging into alien cultures meant the discovery that Christ was not the only "teacher of the Way". He was only one of the agents of a perennial philosophy, and the originality of his message seemed impaired.

But because that message is attached to so compelling a personality, in which divinity may be glossed as genius and humanity finds its expression through the ferocity of the tiger as well as the submissiveness of the lamb, Jesus stands out, even among non-believers, as the most clearly defined and readily acceptable master of the doctrine of regeneration. Professor Pelikan concludes:

> By a curious blend of these currents of religious faith and scholarship with no less powerful influences of skepticism and religious relativism, the universality-with-particularity of Jesus has thus become an issue not only for Christians in the twentieth century, but for humanity. . . . As respect for the organized church has declined, reverence for Jesus has grown. For the unity and variety of the portraits of "Jesus through the centuries" has demonstrated that there is more in him than is dreamt of in the philosophy and Christology of the theologians. Within the church, but also far beyond its walls, his person and message are, in the phrase of Augustine, a "beauty ever ancient, ever new", and now he belongs to the world.

There is an unstated conclusion in that conclusion which ought to be highly disturbing. If, in James Joyce's words, Jesus Christ founded a Church on a pun, and if that Church, fractured in his name, no longer compels respect or exerts authority, then Jesus Christ was misguided. To accept that this may be so is a kind of tribute to his humanity – which by definition, is prone to error – but it is no great tribute to his divinity. This divinity is increasingly discounted by those who take him merely as an exemplar of acceptable human behaviour or a patron of economic and social revolution, but the mystical renewal of his sacrifice and his sanctification of the processes of life through the sacraments requires organization, a sacerdotal tradition, in short a Church. It is not enough to bless ragged breakaway communes blessing bread, or romantic adulators of a kind of mad Galilean poet. If Christ lives through the force of his personality, it may be objected that personality is not enough: there are also enactments and injunctions dependent on an authority of superhuman provenance. This aspect of the God-man it has been found convenient to ignore.

A loyal rebel

Alan Webster

ANTONY BRIDGE
One Man's Advent
181pp. Granada. £8.95.
0 246 12433 4

Antony Bridge, Dean of Guildford, writes of his experience during the war:

> I knew from reading Gibbon that the Egyptian desert in the third and fourth centuries had been as full of saints and hermits as a Christmas cake is full of currants, and now that I was there myself, I was not surprised that they had chosen to live in its hot and stony wilderness; for while Gibbon had mocked them, and as an atheist I disapproved of them, the desert made it impossible for me not to begin to understand them, and even indeed to share something of their taste for its desolation. It was a place of poverty in the truest sense, of complete absence of possessions, things, comforts and frills: indeed, a place conferring on me a sudden freedom which was exhilarating. . . . the self-evident vulnerability of every living thing, especially in time of war, made the fact of being alive at all the one thing that mattered.

Few Anglo-Saxon theological writers, whether Catholic, Anglican or Protestant, have undergone such immediacy of wartime experience. Tony Bridge in his personal apologia is untrammelled by professorial or episcopal or ecclesiastical attitudes. No doubt, some will feel uneasy at his frankness. Others may wonder whether he does justice to the agnosticism of his contemporaries who regret the loss of what they feel to be illusionary consolations. He is very honest about the drawbacks of the Church. Can a body so [illegible] in minor disagreements, still hesitant in admitting at every level of its work the religious insights of women, so obsessed with [illegible] to identify sin with particular [illegible] behaviour, win the confidence of those oppressed by the meaninglessness of life? But he is an affectionate and loyal rebel in the Church of England, of the kind who will do his duty to the institution he serves, even if he may be sketching a portrait or solving a crossword puzzle when the matter of the professional agenda is detached from human suffering, vision or prayer.

Tackling the central issue of the transcendence of God and the place of Christ in the Christian scheme, Bridge uses an artist's approach to suggest analogies, not least about resurrection and new life, which are fresh and illuminating. He is interested in scientists and artists, seeing both groups as concerned with world transformation. He faces squarely the barriers created by believers, the orthodox who maintain the infallibility of creeds and the "twice-born" who are confident that they alone have experienced the truth. His warnings about certitude, so different from the elemental faith of St Francis or Wesley, Wilberforce, Schweitzer or Mother Teresa, lead him to a strong affirmation of the human freedom to make choices and to grant the possibility of a surprising and mysterious God who is not to be packaged by ecclesiastics.

Dean Bridge has written an honest and often highly entertaining autobiography. A hard journey through the Valley of Baca has led him from atheism to faith. He argues strongly for silence, the discipline of the desert and the rejection of today's activism which he believes can people our minds with demons of triviality, excluding those images which would enable us to become ourselves. For him, the world in which he was born has been transformed and he senses a new freedom, so that "old men ought to be explorers". Like a latter-day crusader he sets out to challenge the secularization of our minds.

Avowals and quandaries

Oliver Bowcock

MARK BOOTH (Editor)
What I Believe: 13 eminent people of our time argue for their philosophy of life
142pp. Paperback, £3.95.
0 947752 03 X
Christian Short Stories: An anthology
200pp. £8.95 (paperback, £4.50).
Firethorn Press, 193 Kensington High Street, London W8.
0 947752 00 5

The contributors from whose writings Mark Booth has excerpted passages to make a collection of essays, *What I Believe*, range from the intellectually eminent – W. H. Auden, Thomas Mann, Albert Einstein – to popular celebrities such as the actor Martin Sheen. Such a spectrum of opinion has no force when the editor simply presents personal credos without any unifying theme. One individual concerns himself with faith, another with social progress – and all have written from very different times of life (the H. G. Wells essay is virtually a farewell). The compilation is for the most part posthumous, and not all those included either write well or draw on much thought and learning: it seems a little unfair to pit Jacques Maritain against the evangelist Robert Schuller, who writes, "Tough times never last but tough people do."

Literary talent is not lacking, however, in the second of Booth's anthologies, *Christian Short Stories*. Despite limitations the title may suggest, the editor's perspective is broad; "an anthology not of stories by great Christians but by great writers who have been inspired by Christianity". The result shows the variousness of man's preoccupations with morality and God, from the wry humour of Goldsmith to the quizzical investigations of Graham Greene. Ordering the seventeen stories chronologically is effective, giving a sense of man's immutability within the Christian predicament: Sir Galahad in search of the Grail is not so far from John Cheever's anti-materialist protagonist. The moral concerns of each century, however, are shown to differ widely: Dickens's sentimentality contrasts with Flannery O'Connor's engaged conflict between grace and deception. Though some of the stories, such as those by Wilde and Chekhov, are very well known, they are worth reconsidering in the context of this excellent and thought-provoking anthology.

A ministry of civil servants

Frances Cairncross

Faith in the City: A call for action by Church and nation. The report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas
398pp. Church House Publishing, Church House, Dean's Yard, London SW1P 3NZ. £7.50.
0 7151 3709 3

The Church of England has always found it difficult to cope with the English working class. Even in the heyday of urban church building, in 1851, the religious census of that year found that Anglican attendances, including Sunday school children, varied from a staggering 57 per cent in suburban Hampstead to only 6 per cent in slummy Shoreditch. Fifty years later, after half a century of vigorous missionary activity in some cities, the adults in the Anglican pews were 22 per cent of the population in the rich West End – compared with 4 per cent in the poorest districts.

So for the Church of England's report on the causes and consequences of urban decay to be condemned by a (still unnamed) government minister as "Marxist" ought to have been mildly flattering. "Trotskyist" might have been more complimentary, as it would have suggested that the Church had at last discovered the route by which those latter-day hot-gospellers, the Militant Tendency, insinuate themselves into the lives of the poor. Alas, the report is not Marxist at all. It is, in the most flattering sense of the word, simply Wet. At least, its ideas on what the government ought to do about urban decay are Wet: they involve, quite rightly, spending more public money while, quite wrongly, failing to condemn some of those who live and work in and govern the cities for failing to do more to solve their own problems. But the report is positively revolutionary when it discusses how the Church itself ought to change.

The tone of the report is that of honest and rather sheltered men and women (a teacher, a trade union official, a brace of professors, two bishops, some inner-city clergy) confronted for the first time with the desolation and decay in some of Britain's towns. "What we have seen", they report, "exceeds the limits that would be thought acceptable by most of our fellow citizens." They have visited parts of cities where "shop windows are boarded up, cars cannot be left on the street, residents are afraid either to go out themselves or to ask others in". They have seen Britain's newest, purpose-built ghettos, the peripheral council estates thrown up in the 1950s and 1960s. "With 30–40 per cent or more unemployed", they report, "they have become local subsistence economies, utterly dependent on state benefits." It is a long way from Whitehall, Westminster and the rapidly recovering south-east.

What has created these wastelands? Their decay has been hastened, the report reasonably believes, by the sheer speed and extent of the collapse of manufacturing industry. Between early 1979 and early 1983, the number of manufacturing jobs in Britain fell by a quarter. The subsequent recovery has brought jobs to the south, the east, and the prosperous suburbs. The private-sector services and small businesses which have created the jobs want to locate in places which are nice to look at, where well-educated staff and well-paid customers are likely to live. They do not want to go to Sunderland, or to Kirkby, or to Liverpool. So the country has polarized, with those in jobs becoming wealthier and caring less about the distant isolated communities of poor.

When it comes to solutions within the power of government, the Commission comes up with all the right Owenite or Kinnockian answers. They involve spending more public money. Local authorities in the most poverty-stricken towns – so-called urban priority areas – have frequently lost far more through the Government's general policy of diminishing rate support grant than they have gained in targeted help from the urban programme. The only main central government expenditure programme to have shown significant growth in the inner cities in real terms since 1979, the report remarks wryly, is that on the police. The report does not want wholescale reflation (who calls for that these days?) But if business will not invest in stricken cities, then "the public sector must provide more employment opportunities and increased income support to those who are at present unemployed". And there must be partnership, and pump-priming, and participation; infrastructural investment, more generous welfare benefits, more current public spending, aimed at job creation.

It is not surprising that the Commission made no attempt to cost its proposal. Some of the bill might be met if the "major examination of the whole system of housing finance, including mortgage tax relief" did the decent thing and called for an end to the £4.5 billion subsidy all political parties think home-owners should receive. But more public money is a cure for poverty to be applied with great caution. We tried it for thirty-five years: we built ghettos in which the poor are marooned, and created an education system which three-quarters of our children desert as soon as the law allows, and devised social security benefits which make it too expensive to go to work; while at the same time imposing taxes even on the most lowly paid full-time workers and effecting precious little genuine redistribution of income, wealth or opportunities. Perhaps it is the morality of the poor and the rich which needs changing, more than the level of public expenditure.

That is why the report's views on the dilemma of the Church in decaying cities are more interesting than its views on government policy. It is absolutely candid about the Church's failures. Between 1970 and 1984, the Church of England's electoral roll has declined from 2½ million to 1½ million. On any given Sunday, 119 adults out of an average parish population of 8,410 go to an Anglican church. In a typical urban priority area, the comparable numbers would be only ninety adults out of a parish population of 10,560.

Why? After all, as the report remarks, "the British people are, by a great majority, a believing people". Some 70 per cent claim a belief in God or in some sort of supernatural being, even if the belief sometimes verges on the superstitious rather than the spiritual. Other Churches do better. Most remarkable of all has been the rise of the black-led churches, which have grown at an average of 5 per cent a year, until they now involve perhaps 100,000 people in about 2,500 congregations. They are characterized by their warmth, their conservative attitude to the Bible, and their emphasis on self-help. Can it be any accident that the Anglican churches which, according to the report, have done best in the inner cities are those most similar to the black-led churches: the evangelicals, with their stern views of religious truth, their public declarations of faith, their sing-along choruses and their missionary fervour?

The picture of the Church of England that emerges is one of a body still mainly middle-class and mainly racist, hamstrung by the need to be all things to all people: a sort of religious civil service, under-staffed, well-meaning, ultimately out of touch. "A Church which has only a single highly intellectual style of doctrinal formulation and which orders even its most contemporary forms of worship by reference to a closely printed book of over a thousand pages", observe the commissioners, a note of irritation in their voice, "can never hope to bridge the gulf which separates it from ordinary people." And a Church which selects and trains ministers with more concern for their academic ability than for their pastoral gifts will never develop a truly "local" or indigenous ministry.

So the report urges the Church to remember G. K. Chesterton's nostrum: "For anything to be real it must be local." It wants a Church which reflects local cultures in its worship, local people in its style of working. It wants more co-operation with other local Churches – local ecumenism, with practical roots, sharing property and resources as well as exchanging ideas. It wants local non-stipendiary ministers, part-timers, picked out by their local congregation to help their often exhausted and over-stretched full-time clergy.

All sensible, inventive ideas. But where do they lead? One of the most revealing paragraphs in the report speaks of the tension in some parishes between "the needs of the community, e.g. for employment and provision for youth, and the pastoral needs of the congregation, which was typically elderly and preponderantly female". The Church of England needs to attract new, younger, more socially varied customers without driving away its core – the ageing suburban middle class. An honest and public appraisal of the scale of the problem is a good start.

A different world

Hanif Kureishi

PRAFULLA MOHANTI
Through Brown Eyes
222pp. Oxford University Press. £9.50.
0 19 211784 X

When the astrologer told Prafulla Mohanti's mother that her son would go to Bilat, the land where the Rajahs of India came from, and where they ate beef and drank alcohol, she stroked his head and told him, "It's a different world". The general view in Prafulla's village, where age had no specific meaning and time and life continued after death, was that, different or not, the Land of the Gods would be a better world. For them everything British was best. Prafulla had no idea either way: he imagined acres of Wordsworthian daffodils and the wild forests and dangerous devouring beasts of fairy tales. This was before he became familiar with the East End.

So like thousands of Indians before and after him, including my own father, Prafulla did the familiar things: he broke his mother's heart, saw the Suez Canal, reached Southampton and unknowingly stepped into a lifelong struggle to live in two changing worlds and connect within himself two continents. The great virtue of this moving autobiography is not only that it gives us a vivid sense of what it is to be Prafulla Mohanti, but it successfully connects this with the way England has changed in the past twenty-five years.

Designing lavatories for a living, Prafulla was surprised by everything. In the early 1960s, England was a clean place; National Health babies of incredibly fat pinkness screamed in push-chairs; unlike Indian police, the British police were polite and never violent; and though it was not done for men to walk hand-in-hand as they did in India, half-naked men and women kissed and cuddled in the parks. And whereas in India the British were treated with courtesy and respect, in Britain the notices in estate agents' windows said: "No blacks and no Irish".

For Prafulla the English lacked joy and could not demonstrate affection. They had little love for their elders and in draughty churches they worshipped the blood-stained image of a broken man. But Prafulla was a true innocent and a good man. He expected much good of others and, mostly, others were good to him. He began to make his way as a town planner, architect with the GLC, painter and teacher. He found himself becoming . . . English.

He knew this was so because when he returned to India he found himself cursed with clear sight. He saw filth, malnutrition, bureaucracy, incompetence; and others were jealous of him. He longed for England. Yet when he returned to England he longed for India.

For, of course, by the middle 1960s, it was not so easy to be Indian in England. Enoch Powell had started to express his now notorious views, and this had an immediate effect on Indians like Prafulla. He was spat on, abused, attacked with bricks and called "Paki". His friends were likewise terrified. Prafulla was horrified by the indifference of his colleagues as they designed high-rise hells in the centres of cities. One night, out of the monotony of concrete, a gang emerged, screaming "hit him, hit him!" Prafulla woke up in hospital. His ears were damaged, his teeth knocked out, and his head badly injured.

Since Prafulla has only a loving nature he cannot begin to understand or explain the violence and aggression of British youth or the ways in which Britain has become more intolerant. There is no anger in his book, little bitterness and no gratuitous social comment. He just tells us what he sees so that we see it too. But there is such sadness, humanity and honesty of feeling in this true and simply written account of the unfolding of a life in England, that the effect is far more powerful, disturbing and illuminating than anything that could be written by some socio-political "expert".

Bestiary

Python-coils of leg and trunk
confuse the hand:
where do I stop and you begin?

That thumb-size terracotta hare
we saw in the Egyptian Gallery
had your stretched-back neck now

but not these fingers
grazing and ruminating
all over my back.

You bird-burr my name
then pigeon-pout oohs and ahs
as I grunt and root deeper.

Flopped apart,
flounders washed up
on the slab of the bed,

we gape at our groins
fresh-sprigged with dark parsley
and remember

how earlier that night
we'd kissed in a church doorway
as fire-engines whooped by

their lights flocking over us
the sudden flits and blues
of passerine and paradise.

OLIVER REYNOLDS

Oppression on a pedestal

Mary Lefkowitz

MARINA WARNER
Monuments and Maidens: The allegory of the female form
417pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.
0 297 78408 0

Prominently displayed in the foyer of New York's American Stanhope Hotel is a portrait of Temperance (reproduced on this page). Its subject is a young woman, perhaps about twenty, pale but well nourished, with long brown hair streaming down her back. She is facing the viewer, and with her left hand beckons towards the Capitol, which is situated, rather remarkably, next to the (also remarkably) cascading Potomac. Her forehead is crowned by a thin diadem with a large five-pointed star. Her right hand offers the only visible support to her dress, which otherwise would be falling off her bosom; the dress, billowy in brown and gold satin, reveals a white slip beneath. No legend explains what this picture is or was supposed to convey to its audience, but presumably even my respectable great-grandfather, had he seen it, would have been able to guess that if he gave up drink and followed this determined young person, something good would have been in store for him.

Didactic art, however directly it may have been able to convey its obvious message to its original viewers, appears now to have become so out-of-fashion that, like modern painting or literature, it requires interpreters. In this book Marina Warner undertakes to decode the monumental allegorical statues of maidens that adorn (or clutter up) the façades of classicistic buildings. She begins with the most imposing of maiden monuments, the Statue of Liberty, and moves forward and backward through history to consider many other Minervas, sub-Minervas, Chastities, and their spiritual descendants in English and French art and architecture. In the course of her long survey, she explains some recondite but interesting symbolism, like the sieve of the Vestal Virgin Tuccia that held water, and so proved her chastity, and the many symbolic counterparts of the continent sieve, like Mary Magdalen's *pyxis* and Pandora's box. She demonstrates how the bared female breast can represent nature, and female virtue generally, which suggests that temperance would in fact have led my great-grandfather and his cronies not to an orgy but to a pastoral Washington as the first settlers had known it. Warner shows how female leaders, like Queen Victoria and Mrs Thatcher, find it convenient to adopt some of the accoutrements of Athena of Nike, but provides painful evidence that mortal women playing the role of warrior maiden cause some discomfort, especially to their husbands: on John Gibson's monument to Queen Victoria, now in the Prince's Chamber of the House of Lords, Prince Albert requested that Clemency replace Wisdom, "as the sovereign is a lady". Such fastidiousness may be the clue to a curious local mystery: why on the bronze doors to the 1909 library of Wellesley College, a women's university, the female abstraction Sapientia (Wisdom) is represented by a bearded old man.

But in cases where the allegory is less obvious, that is, in most cases, Warner describes at excessive length what the eye (or mind) might quickly imagine, if permitted to contemplate something other than the small black-and-white plates inconveniently sandwiched into the centre of the book. Not that Warner does not have an eye for the significant detail, like the hair under the triumphant right armpit of Delacroix's Liberty, as with unfeeling, thick-ankled strides she steps over the undignified, nameless corpses of those who have died in her revolutions. But not every allegory was designed with such complexity and sensitivity; nor do they necessarily encode all of the meanings Warner seeks to discover. Possibly no immigrants see her any more, since most arrive by aeroplane, but very few who arrived by boat at Ellis Island failed to comprehend the meaning of the Statue of Liberty; nor is it necessary to infer that the crowds of tourists who now visit her are keenly aware of her sexuality, so that when entering the cavernous interior of the monument, they spontaneously emit a roar "quite like the sound of a male audience in a strip joint when one of the girls promises to uncover big boobs": "Woah, Woah, Woooooah Ah Wah!" We Americans, of course, are notoriously inarticulate, but most of us, I suspect, when climbing up the many stairs to the statue's head, are excited primarily by fear of crowds and height, and finally by the view, the same emotions one feels when ascending any tall and congested monument, like the World Trade Center, the Empire State Building, or even St Paul's Cathedral.

There is an assumption throughout *Monuments and Maidens* that the use of female abstractions has helped, over the ages, to keep women in their subordinate state, and that the principal forms these abstractions take, the warrior maiden and inviolate beauty, are basically reifications that deprive women of their individuality, since only an Athena or Virgin Mary can live up to the male ideal. Warner thus can "decipher" a cartoon from the *Sun*, a journal not ordinarily known for its subtlety, and show how Mrs Thatcher, by acting and talking tough, has been able to assume some of the characteristics of the female embodiment of her country's greatness, Britannia herself in her armour (an image ironically modelled on a coin celebrating the Roman Emperor Claudius' triumph over the island). According to this line of argument, Mrs Thatcher, to the extent that she can become Athena, represents male order and values, whereas the Greenham Common women, who whether in their witches' outfits or the drab overcoat and scarf suitable for a noontide excursion on the bus to Boots, manage to subvert these values. By separating the discussion of the Greenham Common women, with their ordinary nurturing femininity, from her discussion much later in the book, of the celibate back-to-nature nursing mothers like the Virgin Mary, or Delacroix's naked-to-the-waist but proud and untouched Liberty tramping over the corpses, Warner keeps her readers, and perhaps herself, from seeing that both stances of femininity are equally aggressive, and that they both constitute an equally familiar form of symbolism, even in iconography designed by men.

"Temperance" by an unknown painter (American School, c1850), in the collection of the American Stanhope Hotel, New York.

A similar inability to draw connections characterizes the rest of the book. Warner can accurately describe the contents of a painting she has seen or a passage she has read; but she makes no attempt to resolve apparent contradictions in interpretation. She sensibly observes that we are "trapped in the phallocentrism that Freud analysed and unfortunately confirmed, conferring on it the status of revealed truth", and questions the efficacy of counter-measures, such as Judy Chicago's attempt to honour famous women of the past by a set of vulva-shaped images, and suggests that the sword-bearing Justices of yesteryear did not, despite Freud, represent the castration complex of a whole society. But at the same time in her discussion she is willing to adopt Freudian values when it suits her purpose. Medusa's head on Athena's aegis "aligns her with patriarchal priorities, and thus makes her safe as a goddess for a society like Athens"; Athena's emblems on the House of the Sezession in Vienna "reassuringly surrounded" Freud and his fellows "by such wriggling reminders of their virility". Describing Renaissance portrayals of Judith beheading the tyrant Holofernes, she observes that for men, "Judith stirs fears of castration, and if we are women, [Judith] recalls the prescribed predicament that females are perpetually castrated and therefore castrators, seeking to make our own what we cannot have".

Few critics, or even scholars, could cover with consistent competence so vast a subject as allegory in art and literature in Western Europe from the Greeks to the present, and Warner must in many cases rely on translations, or on the opinions of recognized experts in the field. In general, her method in unfamiliar territory has been to select perhaps one or two English-language sources for citation. In the case of Greek literature, however, she chooses not standard commentaries or handbooks, but provocative recent criticism that emphasizes the role of sexuality. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, she asserts, "the Furies, like the Gorgon, represent for the Athenians terror of the original, primitive matriarchal scramble for survival which they imagined had happened and the misrule of 'mannish' women like Clytemnestra", ignoring the far more salient point that the Furies represent the old method of automatic blood vengeance, which Athena recommends be replaced by a court of law. In support of the notion that Greek men were afraid of Greek women's genitalia because they resembled Medusa, Warner asserts and could be proved from ancient sources that in fifth-century Athens "it was the custom for women to remove their pubic hair by singeing"; she (and/or her sources) apparently do not know that only prostitutes are known to have bothered with such depilation. Scholars, Warner complains, have been concerned with establishing the identity of the Riace bronzes, whereas "the female nudes of Greek sculpture are images of generic feminine eroticism and the individuals who posed for them are rarely credited with an historical identity or irretrievable from oblivion". But what about all the nameless *kouroi*, the statues of young men so indistinguishable that they used to be called Apollos?

Far from helping the reader to understand the text or painting in question, such over-interpretation keeps him or her from seeing their central messages, which concerned rather such simple and universal values as the triumph of freedom over slavery, justice over injustice, civilization over barbarism. But Warner is determined not only to leave nothing to the imagination, but also to teach us whenever possible a moral lesson about women: for example,

> The naked female subject in art often expresses the ever-elusive other, residing outside the confines of our flawed and fallen world, in some natural and primal paradise for which nakedness can be a sign. Yet this conflation of nature and woman only continues the false perception that neither is inside culture, that women do not participate in it, let alone create it. The converse is true.

A similar failure to come to grips with (one is tempted to say re-read) what she is saying dominates the final chapter of the book, which concerns Tiresias' famous observation that women get ten times as much pleasure from the sexual act as men. Warner refuses to take his utterance at face value, but instead uses the story as a parable for a new type of human behaviour, which would require that men, like Tiresias, try to understand the female experience; she recommends that we listen to the voices of females who speak through the old allegories: "they have been subjected for so long. And they are saying, Listen." But according to the ancient sources, Tiresias expressed no regrets about his time as a woman, which he seems in one way at least to have enjoyed.

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A new Shakespeare poem? The evidence . . .

Gary Taylor

Shakespeare's plays were collected in 1623, in a folio volume – the First Folio – with a preface by two senior members, John Heming and Henry Condell, of the theatrical company for which he wrote most of them. No comparably authoritative early collection of his poetry exists. Three books of non-dramatic verse were separately published during his lifetime: two long narrative poems (*Venus and Adonis*, 1593, and *The Rape of Lucrece*, 1594) and a long sonnet sequence, with a narrative coda ("A Lover's Complaint", 1609). But most writers of long poems also produce shorter ones. Shakespeare did so, at least once: "The Phoenix and the Turtle" was published in Robert Chester's anthology, *Love's Martyr* (1601), for which it may have been especially written.

If Shakespeare did write other occasional poems of this kind, where might we find them? Usually such works only surface into print in some sort of collection. In 1599 a collection of twenty poems entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim* was published, attributed to "W. Shakespeare". It contains two of his sonnets, and three extracts from *Love's Labour's Lost*; four poems known to be by other authors (but nevertheless included in all editions of Shakespeare's works); and eleven poems of unknown authorship. Although some of these eleven may indeed be Shakespeare's, the collection as a whole was clearly a disreputable and unauthorized attempt to capitalize on the enormous early popularity of Shakespeare's two volumes of narrative verse. Likewise, in 1640 a notorious edition of Shakespeare's *Poems* appeared, purporting to do for his non-dramatic verse what the 1623 Folio did for his plays; but in fact the volume simply reprints pieces already published, rearranges the sonnets (and gives them bogus individual titles) and adds a few poems demonstrably not by Shakespeare. Both *The Passionate Pilgrim* and the 1640 *Poems* tried to exploit commercially the value of Shakespeare's name; their attributions are sometimes clearly wrong, and always dubiously motivated. But both volumes testify to a common, unspoken assumption: the belief of pre-Restoration book-buyers (exploited by booksellers) that Shakespeare did write occasional non-dramatic poems, which had not yet seen print.

If their conviction was justified, then the poems they expected could only survive in one form, or rather in a number of varieties of a single form: in manuscript, probably in one of the thousands of manuscript miscellanies surviving from the first half of the seventeenth century. Patient scholarly excavation of this uncharted field has revolutionized post-war editing of Donne, Sidney and other, lesser poets; but Shakespeare's editors, obsessed with increasingly sophisticated technologies for analysing the transmission and manufacture of printed documents, have simply assumed that the manuscripts contain nothing of interest. We have not bothered to look, because we are sure there is nothing to find; after all, if there were anything to find, our predecessors would already have found it. Unfortunately, our predecessors were hardly in a position to study the manuscripts systematically, and for a variety of historical reasons not disposed to study them sympathetically.

Rawlinson Poetical Manuscript 160 is one of a hoard of early manuscripts amassed by Richard Rawlinson (1689–1755) and donated to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in 1756. The manuscript has in this century been called from the stacks by several eminent scholars, including E. K. Chambers and the editors of Jonson's works, C. H. Herford and P. and E. Simpson. Margaret Crum catalogued its entire contents for her *First-Line Index of Manuscript Poetry in the Bodleian Library* (1969). Crum recorded that the miscellany contained an untitled poem attributed to "William Shakespeare"; but she drew no extraordinary attention to this fact. Why should she? The attribution had been noted long before, equally nonchalantly, in Falconer Madan's great *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, (1895) III, 317. The poem had even been included in a Bodleian exhibition of "Shakespeariana" in 1927 (item 120 in the exhibition catalogue). But although the poem has been known by a few Bodleian librarians for almost a century, it has never been reprinted, or discussed.

The poem, which I reproduce on the following page in a modernized and edited text, runs from the middle of folio 108 (recto) to the middle of folio 109 (recto) in the Rawlinson manuscript. It is written in the same elegant secretary hand evident throughout the volume. The miscellany was apparently put together in the 1630s; it contains poems by Ralegh, Donne, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Herrick, Carew and many lesser poets. Fifty other poems in the manuscript are attributed to specific authors; none of those other attributions is demonstrably wrong, forty are demonstrably right and only two are even dubiously ambiguous ("J. D." and "G. H."). The miscellany's attributions thus deserve respect.

One other poem in this manuscript is also credited to "Wm Shakespeare": a six-line "Epitaph" on Elias James (folio 41), first noted by Edmond Malone in the eighteenth century. So short a poem in so convention-bound a genre could never be "proven", on the basis of its style alone, to be by any single author. But it is never attributed to anyone else; Leslie Hotson has shown that Shakespeare may have known an obscure Londoner named "Elias James"; and John Pitcher, who is editing Shakespeare's poems for the Oxford English Texts edition, had already persuaded the general editors of the Oxford Shakespeare, Stanley Wells and myself, to accept it into the canon, before we found this new poem in the same manuscript. Nevertheless, for my purposes in assessing that manuscript's reliability I classified the attribution of this epitaph as "not demonstrably wrong".

The compiler of a private miscellany has no motive for deliberately lying about the authorship of a poem; he may make mistakes, but they will be honest mistakes. In fact, we do not know of a single instance of a poem attributed to Shakespeare in an early manuscript which someone else can be proved to have written. Nor is there any discernible reason for wrongly attributing this untitled lyric to Shakespeare. A sonnet, or a poem on a prominent Stratford citizen, or one about Venus and Adonis, or one by William Strode (who shares with Shakespeare the initials "W. S."), might be credited to Shakespeare by guesswork; but nothing about this lyric invites such a mistaken association.

The scribe testifies to Shakespeare's authorship of the poem. Although we do not know exactly who this witness was, we do know approximately when he testified, that he had no reason to lie and that his other attributions are reliable. Unless other evidence emerges which decisively contradicts this attribution, such "external evidence" itself establishes a prima facie case for Shakespeare's authorship. This evidence could only be overturned by the discovery of some other reliable document which more convincingly attributed the poem to a different author. Like Margaret Crum, I am unaware of the poem's existence in any printed collection from this period; it is not included among the 30,000 items in the Mizener–Boys index of printed English poetry miscellanies, 1521–1750 (at the University of Kansas); nor is it listed in the indexes to the major manuscript collections at the British Library, the Bodleian, Folger, Huntington, Rosenbach, Yale, or Harvard libraries. Although the poem may surface in some other collection, pending any such discovery Rawl Poet MS 160 is our only evidence of its text and authorship. (And of course, even if another manuscript surfaced, it might confirm the Shakespeare attribution, or not attribute the poem at all.)

An anonymous Caroline scribe says that Shakespeare wrote this poem; less explicitly, but no less forcefully, the poem itself says so. Its vocabulary, imagery, style – everything which scholarly jargon lumps together as "internal evidence" – is at least compatible with Shakespeare's authorship, and at most independently suggestive that it could hardly have been written by any other known poet. This is not the place for a full commentary on the poem, but it is at least worth drawing attention to the more interesting verbal parallels:

1 *Shall I fly*: (*1 Henry VI* 4.5.13)

2 *Lovers' baits*: "love's sweet baits" (*Romeo* 2.pr 8)

3 *sorrow breeding*: "the breeder of my sorrow" (*3 Henry VI* 3.3.43); see also *Richard II* 2.2.10–69, which develops a sustained conceit of "sorrow" as an unborn child

5 *sue*: The manuscript has "shew", but this is a contemporary spelling of *sue*, which makes better sense and rhyme. The *sh-* form of the word is very rare, but occurs at *L.L.L.* 3.1.204.

7 *In all duty*: (*Richard II* 1.3.52)

8 *Binds me her servant*: "bind me to your highness' service" (*3 Henry VI* 3.2.43)

10 *joying never*: "never joy'd" (*1 Henry IV* 2.1.13)

11 *vent my lust*: "vent our love" (*Shrew* 1.2.178); "Free vent of words love's fire doth assuage" (*Venus* 334)

12–13 *explain . . . pain by my love*: "something else more plain / That shall express my true love's fasting pain" (*L.L.L.* 4.3.119–20)

14–15 *smiles . . . frown*: "smile . . . frown" (*Venus* 465), "smiles . . . frowning" (*Romeo* 2.3.1), "smiles . . . frown" (*3 Henry VI* 3.3.168)

15 *If she frown*: "If she do frown" (*Two Gentlemen* 3.1.96; of his beloved)

16 *my hopes deceiving*: "beguiled my hopes" (*Two Gentlemen* 5.4.64), "falsify men's hopes" (*1 Henry IV* 1.2.211)

17 *keep out*: three times in Shakespeare

19 *Fly away*: (*Titus* 5.2.11; *2 Henry VI* 2.1.158; *Twelfth Night* 2.4.53, twice; *Winter's Tale* 3.2.21)

22 *fair love*: (*Richard III* 2.1.51; *Lucrece* 7; *L.L.L.* 4.3.377; *Dream* 2.2.35)

27–8 *bear . . . with patience*: (*Romeo* 5.3.261; *Caesar* 2.1.301; *Pericles* 1.2.65)

28–9 *beauty . . . blot*: "blots thy beauty" (*Shrew* 5.2.139); "Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame" (*Venus* 796)

30 *doth her duty*: "do my duty" (*Richard III* 1.3.250)

32 *But alas*: (*Merchant* 1.2.72, 2.1.31; *Troilus* 3.2.168; *Othello* 4.2.53; *Cymbeline* 5.4.129, with "dream" in preceding and following line; *Kinsmen* 1.1.124, 1.2.111)

32–3 *dreams . . . shadows*: "Swift as a shadow, short as any dream" (*Dream* 1.1.144; of love); "poor shadow . . . A dream" (*Richard III* 4.4.83, 88; of the Queen)

35 *love . . . dove*: "Pronounce but 'love' and 'dove'" (*Romeo* 2.1.10; characterizing a lover)

35 *my dove*: (*Dream* 5.1.325; *Hamlet* 4.5.168)

38 *repose us*: (*2 Henry VI* 2.1.196; *Coriolanus* 1.9.74)

39 *Being set, lips met*: "Being set, I'll smother thee with kisses" (*Venus* 18)

40 *Arms twined*: "twining arms" (*Venus* 256); "twine / Mine arms about that body" (*Coriolanus* 4.5. 106–7)

40 *my heart's treasure*: "the treasure of thy heart" (*2 Henry VI* 2.1.20); "my soul's treasure" (*2 Henry VI* 3.2.382); "this treasure in mine arms" (*Titus* 4.2.173; of a person)

41 *Gentle wind*: "gentle wind" (*Venus* 189); "gentlest winds" (*Pericles* 3.3.37)

43 *gold tresses*: "golden tresses" (Sonnet 68)

45 *fair* (as a noun, meaning "fairness, beauty"): eleven times in Shakespeare

45–6 *impair all my senses*: "doth impair the seeing sense" (*Dream* 3.2.179)

46–7 *senses / As amazed*: "Be not amazed, call all your senses to you" (*Merry Wives* 3.3.118)

48 *more than a mortal*: "more in them than mortal knowledge" (*Macbeth* 1.5.3); "More than in mortal seeming" (*Cymbeline* 1.6.171); "more than mortal" (*Kinsmen* 5.1.14)

51–2 *forehead fair . . . and high*: "high forehead" (*Romeo* 2.1.18, in a catalogue of a woman's features); "fair forehead" (*Hamlet* 3.4.43)

53 *without wrinkle*: Shakespeare associates brows with wrinkles at *3 Henry VI* 5.2.19; *Venus* 139; Sonnet 63; *John* 2.1.505, 4.2.192; *Merchant* 4.1.270; *Lear* 1.4.284.

54 *fair brows*: "fair ladies' brows" (*Romeo* 1.1.230); "fair brow" (Sonnet 19)

55 *Star-like*: (*Timon* 5.1.63; *Henry VIII* 5.4.46)

55 *eyes*: compared to stars at *Lucrece* 13; Sonnet 14; *Venus* 1031–2; *Hamlet* 1.5.17; *Winter's Tale* 5.1.67

55–7 *Star . . . eyes . . . twinkle . . . cheeks*: "Two of the fairest *stars* in all the heaven . . . do entreat her *eyes* / To *twinkle* in their spheres till they return . . . The brightness of her *cheek*" (*Romeo* 2.2.15–19; of a beloved); "twinkling stars" (*Two Gentlemen* 2.6.9)

55 *win love's prize*: "win the prize" (*Shrew* 2.1.342)

57–8 *In her cheeks . . . beauty's banner*: "beauty's ensign . . . in thy cheeks" (*Romeo* 5.3.94–5)

57–8 *who seeks / Shall find*: "who seeks . . . Shall never find" (*Antony* 2.7.83–4)

61 *lips red*: lips are "red" at *Venus* 516; Sonnet 130; *As You* 3.5.120; *Twelfth Night* 1.5.247.

61–2 *fancy's fed / With all sweets*: "where is fancy fed . . . how nourishèd" (*Merchant* 3.2.63–5); "Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy" (*As You* 4.3.101)

64 *There to trade*: "I will trade to them both" (*Merry Wives* 1.3.72, meaning "carry on a sexual affair with two women"); "food / Of us that trade in love" (*Antony* 2.5.1–2)

68 *all the world*: 56 times in Shakespeare

70 *high admirations*: "top of admiration" (*Tempest* 3.1.38)

71 *bare* (as a noun, meaning "bareness; naked flesh"): *Lover's Complaint* 95 (in a catalogue of a beloved's attractions)

71 *past compare*: (*Shrew* 5.2.174; *Romeo* 2.5.43, of a beloved's physical attractions)

72–3 *parts . . . asunder*: (*Henry V* Pro 22; in *Henry V* of "high, upreared and abutting fronts")

74 *naught but*: 16 times

75 *so rare*: 6 times

76 *'tis a wonder*: (*Shrew* 5.2.189)

78–9 *nature's perfection . . . blot*: "the blots of nature's hand / Shall not in their issue stand; / Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar, / Nor mark prodigious" (*Dream* 5.1.409–12)

80 *beauty's queen*: "beauty's queen" (*Passionate Pilgrim* 4; authorship uncertain); "beauties whereof now he's king" (Sonnet 63); "crowned / The non-pareil of beauty" (*Twelfth Night* 1.5.253–4)

80 *in election*: (*Titus* 1.1.22, 183)

83 *pleasures in plenty*: "Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty" (*Macbeth* 4.3.71)

85 *to my mind*: (*Hamlet* 1.4.14)

89 *some say*: 19 times

90 *In such a case*: (*Romeo* 2.4.50; *Caesar* 4.3.6; *Antony* 2.2.98; *Coriolanus* 5.4.31)

These parallels vary widely in quality and importance. No one will suppose that Shakespeare is the only author to have called lips "red" (161); but it is worth knowing that he did use so conventional an adjective so often – and that three of the other four examples occur, as does this one, in the midst of a catalogue of physical attractions. (Spenser, by contrast, although he refers to lips fifty-three times, never calls them "red".) Even the clichés of the poem are clichés Shakespeare frequently employed. The cumulative force of the verbal similarities between the poem and Shakespeare's acknowledged works could only be weakened by the identification of another poet whose works provided more and better parallels; scepticism may busy itself surveying the *oeuvre* of all possible candidates in the half-century before 1630. But the example of Spenser – the only Elizabethan poet with a canon comparable in size to Shakespeare's, and with a canon of non-dramatic verse considerably larger than Shakespeare's – suggests that any such search is likely to be fruitless. The Shakespeare canon supplies 107 parallels, here quoted, for 52 phrases in the poem; the Spenser canon, only 47 parallels for 18 phrases. (Shakespeare's poems alone – a mere fraction of Spenser's – provide parallels for 14 phrases.) None of the Spenser parallels is as striking as the best Shakespearean ones.

Shakespeare's style, in all his authenticated works, continually stitches old to new: old phrases and images recycled, but also – always – new and unique language. Shakespeare commands the largest vocabulary of any writer of the period; his genuine works always contain an unusually high proportion of words which he uses only once. Consequently, any work with a credible claim to Shakespeare's authorship must also contain a reasonable number of such "unique" words. Paradoxically, if a poem of any length does not contain words which Shakespeare never elsewhere uses, then that poem *cannot* be by Shakespeare. The poem "Shall I die?" contains seven "unique" words: *explain*, *inflection*, *admiring* (noun), *desiring* (noun), *speck*, *scanty* and *contenting* (noun). Moreover, one of these words probably, and another certainly, antedate the first occurrence recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "admiring" (first recorded elsewhere in 1603) and "scanty" (first recorded in 1660). With the possible exception of Nashe, Shakespeare coins more new words than any poet of the period; these neologisms therefore reinforce the poem's claim to authenticity. Moreover, Shakespeare elsewhere makes much use of words based on the same root from which both these coinages are formed – including the first recorded use of "admiringly" (*All's Well*

1

Shall I die? Shall I fly
Lovers' baits and deceits,
sorrow breeding?
Shall I tend? Shall I send?
Shall I sue, and not rue
my proceeding?
In all duty her beauty
Binds me her servant for ever.
If she scorn, I mourn,
I retire to despair, joying never. 10

2

Yet I must vent my lust
And explain inward pain
by my love breeding.
If she smiles, she exiles
All my moan; if she frown,
all my hopes deceiving –
Suspicious doubt, O keep out,
For thou art my tormentor.
Fly away, pack away;
I will love, for hope bids me venter. 20

3

'Twere abuse to accuse
My fair love, ere I prove
her affection.
Therefore try! Her reply
Gives thee joy – or annoy,
or affliction.
Yet howe'er, I will bear
Her pleasure with patience, for beauty
Sure [will] not seem to blot
Her deserts, wronging him doth her duty 30

[4]

In a dream it did seem –
But alas, dreams do pass
as do shadows –
I did walk, I did talk
With my love, with my dove,
through fair meadows.
Still we passed till at last
We sat to repose us for our pleasure.
Being set, lips met,
Arms twined, and did bind my heart's treasure. 40

5

Gentle wind sport did find
Wantonly to make fly
her gold tresses.
As they shook I did look,
But her fair did impair
all my senses.
As amazed, I gazed
On more than a mortal complexion.
[Them] that love can prove
Such force in beauty's inflection. 50

6

Next her hair, forehead fair,
Smooth and high; next doth lie,
without wrinkle,
Her fair brows; under those,
Star-like eyes win love's prize
when they twinkle.
In her cheeks who seeks
Shall find there displayed beauty's banner;
Oh admiring desiring
Breeds, as I look still upon her. 60

7

Thin lips red, fancy's fed
With all sweets when he meets,
and is granted
There to trade, and is made
Happy, sure, to endure
still undaunted.
Pretty chin doth win
Of all [the world] commendations;
Fairest neck, no speck;
All her parts merit high admirations. 70

8

A pretty bare, past compare,
Parts those plots which besots
still asunder.
It is meet naught but sweet
Should come near that so rare
'tis a wonder.
No mishap, no scape
Inferior to nature's perfection;
No blot, no spot:
She's beauty's queen in election. 80

9

Whilst I dreamt, I, exempt
[From] all care, seemed to share
pleasures in plenty;
But awake, care take –
For I find to my mind
pleasures scanty.
Therefore I will try
To compass my heart's chief contenting.
To delay, some say,
In such a case causeth repenting. 90

COLLATIONS: 29 will] wit MS 49 Them] then MS 68 the world] (*suggested by Stanley Wells*); thats cald MS 82 From] for MS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

5.3.44) and of a particular sense of "scant" (*OED* v 3; *Troilus* 4.4.49).

Most readers would, I trust, immediately agree that if Shakespeare wrote the poem at all, then he must have written it fairly early in his career. Certainly, those to whom I have shown the poem have reacted instinctively in this way: I did myself. The poem – in its subject-matter, its tone, its obsessive rhyming, its heavy verbal symmetries, the conventionality of much of its imagery, its repetition of certain words, its relative lightness of tone – bears every hallmark, stylistically, of belonging to the sixteenth century, and more particularly to the period between the publication of *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and the growing influence of Donne. Consequently, if Shakespeare did write it, we should expect to find not only evidence of "Shakespeare's style", in general, but more specifically evidence which associates the poem strongly with a particular period of his work. Although there remain minor disagreements about the relative dating of the canon, in general scholars have little difficulty distinguishing Shakespeare's early, middle and late periods from one another; a variety of internal stylistic evidence all tends to converge to suggest that each play and poem belongs in a certain range of a sliding chronological scale. We should expect a similar clustering of evidence here, and we should expect that clustering to suggest an early date. Few people would be willing to credit the attribution if it forced us to place the poem alongside *The Tempest*, or *Antony and Cleopatra*, or even *Twelfth Night*.

Noticeably, most of the parallels do come from Shakespeare's early period. The four works with the most parallels are *Romeo* (ten), *Venus* (eight), *Shrew* and the Sonnets (five each) – all probably earlier than 1596. If we ignore the Sonnets altogether (which probably straddle the borderline), 58 of the 85 quoted parallels (68 per cent) are from works no later than *1 Henry IV* and *The Merchant of Venice*, which mark a kind of watershed in the Shakespeare chronology (1596–7). Shakespeare's authentic works manifest a similar clustering of verbal parallels in specific chronological periods.

Such evidence is confirmed by another test which has proved successful in dating the sequence of Shakespeare's work. The late Dr Eliot Slater demonstrated that there was a statistically significant correlation between the distribution of "rare" words (those which occur less than eleven times in the canon) and the demonstrable or probable order of composition, as determined by other evidence. There are fifteen such "rare" words in this poem: *annoy* (noun), *bare* (noun), *besot*, *exempt* (adj), *exile* (verb), *impair*, *inferior* (adj), *mishap*, *repenting*, *scape* (noun), *star-like*, *suspicious*, *tresses*, *twine*, *wantonly*. These words occur 73 times in the Shakespeare canon (excluding the parts of *Kinsmen* attributed to John Fletcher). Of these links with the rare vocabulary of Shakespeare's works, 52 (= 74 per cent) occur in plays earlier than the 1596 watershed; if we added the Sonnets (many of which must have been written by 1596), the figure would be 57. Only 16 come from all the later works put together. The strongest links are with *1 Henry VI* (10), *Venus*, the Sonnets and *3 Henry VI* (5 each).

The poem contains 74 rhyming pairs; of these, seven involve "unique" words, for which we cannot expect to find parallels elsewhere in Shakespeare's rhymes. Of the remaining 141 words which rhyme, 121 are rhymed elsewhere in the canon, and 28 of the 67 rhymes – over a third – yoke rhyme pairs which Shakespeare uses elsewhere: die/fly; breeding/proceeding, beauty/duty, ever/never, smile/exile (*Passionate Pilgrim* 14; authorship uncertain); out/doubt, love/prove, annoy/joy, blot/not, last/past, pleasure/treasure, find/wind, amazed/gazed, fair/hair, high/lie, eyes/prize, cheeks/seeks, meet/sweet, made/trade, endure/sure, asunder/wonder, blot/spot, awake/take, find/mind, delay/say. There are 115 instances of one or another of these rhyme pairs in the canon. It is not surprising that the greater number of these parallels come from early work, because Shakespeare used rhyme more often in that period. But the rhymes link the poem not only with the early period generally, but with specific early works. The strongest links are with the Sonnets (24), *Love's Labour's Lost* (12) and *Venus* and *Lucrece* (9 each). The last three all date from 1593–4; many of the Sonnets were probably written during the same period.

Noticeably, *Venus* (a short work) and the Sonnets provide large numbers of parallels in all three categories of chronological evidence available: verbal parallels, "rare" words and rhymes. The stylistic features thus not only conspire to suggest that the poem, if by Shakespeare, is by the young Shakespeare; they conspire to place the poem's likeliest date of composition in the very years when Shakespeare undoubtedly indulged in a brief burst of non-dramatic verse.

I have so far dealt only with quantifiable, quotable aspects of Shakespeare's style; by those criteria the poem could certainly have been written by Shakespeare in the early to mid-1590s. But is the poem "good enough to be Shakespeare's"? In recent weeks a few distinguished critics – at least one on the basis of nothing more than hearing the poem read to him by a journalist over the telephone – have denied the poem's authenticity because it is, they say, "feeble". Anyone is entitled to an opinion of the poem's merit. But judgments of quality cannot be made the primary, or even the secondary, basis of attributions of authorship: if they were, much of Shakespeare's work would be relegated to the foot of the page (as indeed it was, by Alexander Pope in his 1723 edition). Nor can Shakespeare's early work be judged by the standards he himself created, later in his career. And whoever wrote the poem, it must have been intended as a technical exercise: a kind of verbal obstacle-course, in which one of every three syllables is a rhyme. The originality and difficulty of the rhyme scheme produce a poem which is predictably "artificial", and hence as admirable to Elizabethan critical taste as it seems perverse to us. Undoubtedly, the effort to rhyme in places distorts the syntax and weakens the sense. But Shakespeare's rhymed poetry is often awkward: much of the rhyme in the plays was once dismissed as spurious, because it is awkward.

By such means one can excuse the poem's weaknesses: a young poet, who was never at his best (as Campion and Jonson were) in rhyme, engaged in a technical exercise. But one must also say, in the poem's defence, that reports of its feebleness have been greatly exaggerated. From its very first line, the poem sets up a conventional Petrarchan metaphor, and subverts it: to "fly" in battle would be immoral, to "fly" from an obsessive sexual entanglement would be wise. And whereas the soldier wishes to "die" (perish), a lover does wish for death (orgasm), and yet in seeking that orgasm he must, in the traditional hyperbole, "die" over and over in the inhospitable climate of his beloved's neglect or disdain. The narrator see-saws between obsessive engagement and ambiguous detachment. His love "breeds" sorrow, not children (l 3); he must "vent" his lust, verbally or physically (l 1). Does "admiring" breed "desiring", or vice versa (l 59)? Are the besotting "plots" which part asunder bronsts or thighs (ll 72–3)? His dream "did seem" – and even then he interrupts himself parenthetically to lament the fleeting insubstantiality of his "dream" (which may of course have been a reality, which he recognizes only now as an emotional illusion). He ends with a mere detumescent iteration of what "some say" – implying, of course, that others say something else. But what those some say is itself ambiguous. What causes repenting: to delay (the pursuit of his human prize, the commencement of his wooing) or to linger (in his predicament)? Given the sexual pun on "case", which Shakespeare uses so often elsewhere, the last lines may mean that he will regret it if he lingers too long in that most intimate physical cul-de-sac.

But I do not want to pre-empt interpretation of the poem, or to dwell on its irony at the expense of its sweetness. I have, in any case, already said enough, I hope, to persuade readers that the poem must be regarded as presumptively Shakespeare's, until proved otherwise. An early document attributes it to him; we have no particular reason to doubt that document; the poem's style is compatible with the document's attribution. Whoever demands more proof than that is in fact demanding that a poem pass the threshold of his own critical esteem before it can be admitted into Shakespeare's house. But documents, like defendants, must be presumed innocent until proved guilty; unless, and until, this document's attribution can be disproved, this poem must be included in any edition of Shakespeare's works which claims to be "complete".

. . . and the counter-arguments

Robin Robbins

Evidence in cases of literary ascription falls into two categories: external, occurring outside the work in question, of the kind listed for this period by Samuel Schoenbaum – contemporary references, dedications, entries in the Stationers' Register or in Revels Office books or catalogues, attributions in anthologies, and so on; and internal – tests of vocabulary, syntax and versification which show that identifiable habits demonstrated in the text in question are evinced in a predominant number of samples of the same length taken at random across the presumptive author's work, but not in such samples from the works of any other writer of the time. Of all types of internal evidence, parallels with other works are the least reliable. As the late M. St Clare Byrne observed in 1932, they are susceptible of three different explanations: they *may* arise from hitherto unsuspected identity of authorship; they may arise from plagiarism, deliberate or unconscious, out of fraudulent intent or mere admiring imitativeness; or they may be (and most often are) simply coincidental. Most parallels between authors involve shared language and commonplace imagery. A. Q. Morton offers the caution in *Literary Detection* that vocabulary belongs not to authors but to subject-matter. Because language is a common possession, authors, in Morton's words, "are identified not by the habits in which they resemble each other, but by the habits in which they differ from one to another". Parallels, therefore, can indicate only possibilities, for the most part.

As regards external evidence, the ascription at the foot of "Shall I die?" in Bodleian MS Rawl Poet 160 patently constitutes a prima facie case – but Gary Taylor betrays the nature of his approach by using not the word "constitutes" but "establishes". It does not "establish" anything but its own existence. We do not know who wrote the ascription, or exactly when between 1630 and around 1660. We do not know whether he (or she) copied the ascription from the source-text (or, if so, what degree of authority that text possessed), expanded it from a hint there such as the initials "W. S.", or simply guessed.

To get round this, various arguments are offered by Mr Taylor for the quality of this miscellany's attributions, and for the attributional value of miscellanies in general. Their study, it is alleged, has "revolutionized post-war editing of Donne, Sidney and other lesser poets". But the principal post-war editor of Donne, Helen Gardner, judged such miscellanies "of little value in an attempt to establish the text" of the *Divine Poems*, and "worthless" in the case of the *Elegies* and *Songs and Sonnets*. Professor Gardner's co-editor, Wesley Milgate, made no use of them. And for the Oxford edition of the poems of Sidney, William Ringler found his copy-texts in the printed editions, with the exception of the manuscript of *The Psalms of David*. Some revolution. When the study of miscellanies bears substantial fruit, it will be for the generation of poets after Sidney, Shakespeare and Donne, for Cavalier poets such as Herrick and Carew.

To boost the status of the ascription, Taylor says that Rawl Poet 160 "contains poems by Ralegh" *et al*, and then goes on: "Fifty other poems in the manuscript are attributed to specific authors; none of those other attributions is demonstrably wrong". The rhetorical trick here is that the ascription to Ralegh of what is titled "The Pilgrimage" has long been accepted as "demonstrably wrong". So much for the miscellany's apparently spotless record of attribution. But there are other problems. Taylor seizes on the earliest possible date for compilation of the miscellany ("the miscellany was apparently put together in the 1630s"), but it could well be much later – and therefore even less likely to have been written by someone with personal knowledge of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The correct ascriptions are, by and large, those to later poets, whose works may well have been in print when the miscellany was compiled (Jonson, 1616; Donne, 1633; Carew, 1640; Herrick, 1647–8), implying no special knowledge on the part of the compiler, nor that he did any more than copy down what he saw in his source or sources, as he did, presumably, with "The Pilgrimage".

"The scribe testifies to Shakespeare's authorship", Taylor says. But either he copied the attribution, which is inadmissible as testimony, being mere hearsay, or he made it up, and is therefore perjured. The ascription is thus not "evidence" which "could only be overturned by the discovery of some other reliable document". Likewise, to say that "if another manuscript surfaced, it might confirm the Shakespeare attribution" is tacitly to slip across the postulate that confirmation is afforded by mere repetition. Documents, we are told in conclusion, "like defendants, must be presumed innocent until proved guilty". This sort of rhetoric can easily be reversed: "Shakespeare must be presumed innocent of this poem until convicted on something better than hearsay." Claims that the ascription is supported by the manuscript's authority depend on full, patient investigation of the manuscript's status – its date, its relationship to printed texts and to other miscellanies with a similar selection of contents (there are several in the Bodleian alone). Donald Foster, of the University of California, Santa Barbara, is engaged in such a study. Until that is published, we must suspend judgment on the external evidence for this attribution.

Turning, then, to internal evidence, given the criteria outlined above for tests of vocabulary, syntax and versification, it is not surprising that the need for hard evidence is evaded. What is asserted of the epitaph on Elias James may fitly be reapplied to "Shall I die?" itself: "So short a poem in so convention-bound a genre could never be 'proven', on the basis of its style alone, to be by any single author." The poem contains only 443 words (treating "'tis", etc, as two), and even the techniques of Morton and others, which involve counting the most frequent closed-system function-words such as articles, prepositions and conjunctions (excluding, however, verbal auxiliaries and personal pronouns as heavily determined by context), require minimum samples of 1,000 words or so, and "proportional pairs" even more, while study of the preferred positions of certain common words, of characteristic sentence-openings, is precluded by the demands made on syntax by the poem's rigid and intricate form. For the same reason, the one outstanding characteristic, the complete absence of the definite article except in the conjectural emendation of l 68, would not necessarily signify much if found in another work.

Nevertheless, we are bombarded with "cumulative", that is, allegedly statistically persuasive evidence. In the absence of respectable tests of inconspicuous function-words, resort is had to individual occurrences and collocations of open-class words – nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs – which as evidence are vulnerable in two respects: the conspicuously individual usage is precisely that most likely to strike and be reused by an imitator, so that it must fail as a test between one inventive poet and his many derivative admirers; and such words are determined by context: a subject demands a particular vocabulary, love poetry tends to be written in the language of love. Consequently, such comparisons of vocabulary and imagery are exceptionally prone to what has become known since its classic exposure by Ephim G. Fogel as the "salmons in both" fallacy, and are just as much in need as more respectable tests of the negative check: that is, of hard proof that similar correspondences can be found nowhere else.

As one negative check we are offered Spenser, in whom, it is alleged, there are "only 47 parallels for 18 phrases" in "Shall I die?", against "107 . . . parallels for 52 phrases" in Shakespeare. First, it must be noted that the total number of words in Spenser's works is less than half of Shakespeare's, so that to make the figures nearly comparable we should multiply this alleged number of Spenser's correspondences by 2.3, producing 108 parallels for 41

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phrases – not very different from 107 for 52. Secondly, we are not given the Spenserian parallels to judge for ourselves. Here they are (so far as they could be assembled by an amateur without benefit of computer):

8 *Bluds me her servant*: "to her service bind" (*Faerie Queene* 4.2.44.4)

10 *joying never*: "joying" occurs nowhere in Shakespeare, but six times in Spenser

12–13 *explain . . . pain/by my love*: "explain" does not occur in Shakespeare, but does in *FQ* 6.1.46.5, while "love" and "pain" occur within a line seven times in Spenser

12 *inward pain*: (*FQ* 2.1.42.9, 5.6.19.2)

14–15 *smiles . . . frown*: "Her smile me draws, her frown me drives away" (*Amoretti* 21.12)

16 *hopes deceiving*: "hope deceived" (*FQ* 3.7.28.2)

17 *Suspicious doubt*: "doubt and dread suspicious" (*FQ* 3.10.59.5)

17 *keep out*: (*FQ* 5.9.22.7)

19 *Fly away*: (*FQ* 1.2.10.8, 1.6.18.7, 1.6.28.2, 2.3.32.4, 5.12.6.5, 6.6.28.9; *Amoretti* 87.14; *Prothalamion* 8)

19 *pack away*: (*FQ* 6.6.21.6)

22 *fair love*: frequent in Spenser, eg, *Amoretti* 28.13, 65.1; *Epithalamion* 43, 305

27–8 *bear . . . with patience*: "with patience . . . bear" (*FQ* 1.10.28.8, 7.6.49.6)

28–9 *beauty . . . blot*: "blot your beauty" (*FQ* 5.11.62.3)

29–30 *blot / Her deserts*: "blotteth good deserts" (*FQ* 5.3.38.9)

30 *doth her duty*: "did duty" (*FQ* 2.9.28.7)

40 *my heart's treasure*: "my heart's eternal treasure", "the treasure of her heart" (*Colin Clouts come home againe* 47, 571)

41 *Gentle wind*: "gentle warbling wind" (*Shepheardes Calender*, June 4)

41–2 *sport . . . wantonly*: "wanton sport" (*FQ* 2.12.16.3)

43 *gold tresses*: "golden tresses" (*Amoretti* 37.1)

45 *fair* (as a noun, meaning "fairness, beauty"): (eg, *Amoretti* 27.1, 79.3)

46–7 *senses: / As amazed*: "amazed senses" (*FQ* 1.4.7.3)

48 *more than a mortal*: "more than mortal" (*Teares of the Muses* 514)

51 *forehead fair*: "fair forehead" (*FQ* 3.11.13.7)

53 *without wrinkle*: "brows, Full of wrinkles" (*Shepheardes Calendar*, Feb 44)

55 *eye*s: compared to stars at *Amoretti* 9.7

55–7 *Star . . . eyes . . . twinkle . . . cheeks*: "in her cheeks . . . eyes like twinkling stars" (*FQ* 4.10.50.5–7)

55 *win the prize*: "wins the prize" (*FQ* 4.4. Arg)

57–8 *In her cheeks . . . beauty's banner*: "her fair countenance, like a goodly banner" (*Amoretti* 3.11)

57–8 *who seeks / Shall find*: "Who seeks with painful toil shall honour soonest find" (*RQ* 2.3.40.9); cf Matthew 7:7, etc: "Seek, and ye shall find"

61 *fancy's fed*: "fancies fed": (*FQ* 4.Pr.1.9), "fancy fed" (*FQ* 3.1.56.1, 6.10.30.4; *Amoretti* 72.9), "fed with fancies" (*Amoretti* 78.12), "fed her fancy" (*FQ* 3.10.8.8)

64 *to trade*: "To win fair Leda to his lovely trade" (*FQ* 3.11.32.2), "lovers' trade" (*Amoretti* 51.5)

68 *all* [*the world*]: fifty-seven times in Spenser

74 *naught but*: thirty-eight times

75 *so rare*: three times

79 *No blot*: "No mortal blemish may her blot" (*Shepheardes Calender*, April 54)

79 *no spot*: (*FQ* 4.1.4.8)

80 *beauty's queen*: (*Shepheardes Calender*, August 138; *FQ* Ded Sonn 17.6, 4.5.12.7, 5.3.19.9, 6.10.17.5; *Hymn of Beauty* 267)

83 *pleasures in plenty*: "plenty of all pleasure" (*FQ* 4.10.23.1)

85 *to my mind*: "unto my mind" (*Hymn of Heavenly Beauty* 106)

89 *some say*: four times

90 *In such a case*: (*Colin* 590; *FQ* 2.4.32.7)

These parallels, varying no more widely in quality than those adduced from Shakespeare, amount to 58 parallels for 36 phrases (rather than the 47 for 18 alleged), the adjusted figures being 133 for 82 – far in excess of those in Shakespeare. Again, the expressed dogma that Shakespeare uses "always – new and unique language" has generated a false argument, here easily exploded by the considerable overlap between Shakespeare and Spenser.

Lest anyone should think that the case for Shakespeare is being replaced with a case for Spenser, the unreliability of the "salmons in both" procedure may be demonstrated by the incidence of parallels in other Elizabethan love-poets. The sonnets of Daniel, Drayton and Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, principally, furnish the following:

9–10 *mourn . . . despair*: "mourn, nay more, despair" (Drayton, *Idea* 17.13)

10 *retire*: "disdain forced me retire" (Daniel, *Delia* (1592) 36.4)

10 *joying never*: "never joy" (*Delia* 33.5), "never joyed" (Drayton, *Idea's Mirror* 38.9)

12–13 *explain . . . pain by my love*: "express . . . pains", "paint out my passion's pain" (*IM* 49.2, 28.7)

14–15 *smiles . . . frown*: "smiling frowning" (*IM* 9.9)

15 *if she frown*: "If beauty thus be clouded with a frown" (*Delia* 21.1)

16 *All my hopes deceiving*: "all my hopes" (Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 86.13), "All my powers of care bereaving" (Francis Beaumont, "Come, Sleep")

20 *hope bids me*: "love bids me" (*Idea* 38.1)

28–9 *beauty . . . blot*: "with foul abuse such beauties blot" (*Astrophil* 24.11)

30 *wronging him*: "She doth me wrong, to grieve so true a heart" (*Delia* 21.14)

32 *But alas*: "but alas" (*Astrophil* 96.12)

35 *my dove*: "my young dove" (*Astrophil* 63.3)

45 *fair* (as a noun, meaning "fairness, beauty"): according to *OED*, current since *c* 888

53 *without wrinkle*: "brows, all wrinkled" (*IM* 14.3)

54 *Her fair brow*s: "her fair brow", "fairest brow" (*Delia* 22.5, 39.12)

55 *Star-like eyes*: "star-like eyn" (Harington, *Orlando Furioso* 35.2); also compared to stars by, eg Daniel: *Delia* 19.3, 33.6, 34.2, 5, 9, 13; Sidney: *Astrophil* 26.14, 48.1 – being, of course, a basic conceit of that sequence

61 *lips red . . . sweet*: "lips more sweet, more red" (*Astrophil* 91.7)

68 *all* [*the world*]: three times in *Delia*, once in *Astrophil*

71 *bare* (as a noun, meaning "bareness, naked flesh"): current, according to *OED*, from *c* 1300 to early seventeenth century, including Marston, and Beaumont and Fletcher in *A King and No King*

72–3 *Parts . . . asunder*: "partyn asunder" (*OED*, *c* 1440; no separate entry for verb with adverb)

74 *naught but*: (*Idea*, *Astrophil*)

75 *so rare*: (*Delia*, *Idea*, *Astrophil*)

89 *some say*: (*Idea* three times)

90 *In such a case*: (*Delia* 37.12)

Again, relative sample sizes must be taken into account. To the nearest 1,000 words they are, in thousands: Shakespeare 885, Daniel 7, Drayton *Idea* 6, *Idea's Mirror* 7, Sidney 13. Thus to make figures comparable we should, crudely, multiply Daniel's by 126, Drayton's in *Idea* by 147, in *Idea's Mirror* by 126, Sidney's by 68.

It is claimed as support for the Shakespearean hypothesis that "None of the Spenser parallels is as striking as the best Shakespearean ones": in fact, as has been said, striking words and phrases are the most likely to be adopted by imitators. That a Jacobean play echoes *Othello*'s "toads to knot and gender" with "gendering of toads" does not show that Shakespeare wrote Webster, nor would such a hypothesis be made any more likely by the accumulation of the large number of such borrowings in the latter's plays. This must be borne in mind when considering the thirteen phrases in "Shall I die?" paralleled in Shakespeare but not in our small sample from other authors of the period: "Shall I fly?", "Lovers' baits", "sorrow breeding", "vent my lust", "dreams . . . shadows", "love . . . dove", "repose us", "being set, lips met", "Arms twined", "impair all my senses", "high admirations", "past compare", "'tis a wonder", matched (more or less) in *1*, *2* and *3 Henry VI*, *Romeo* (3), *Shrew* (3), *Venus* (3), *Dream* (2) and *Tempest*, with duplicates in *Richard III* and *Coriolanus* (2). Eleven of these parallels, not all specifically amatory in significance, and so not dictated by context, come from works with a strong love-interest – the likely viewing and reading of the amateur love-poet, and so explicable as rising from the interest of the writer in another's writing, rather than repetition or anticipation of his own.

Venus and Adonis was available in print in 1593, *Romeo and Juliet* in 1597, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1600. In Act 3, Scene 2 of the *Dream* is found the closest formal analogue in Shakespeare to the 16-rhyme-word, 62-syllable stanza of "Shall I die?" – Puck's 16-rhyme-word, 79-syllable spell "On the ground / Sleep sound". The parallel, again, is easily explicable. A naive imitator, for example, might well have chosen to condense Puck's stanza form and reapply it for a longer love-poem. He would, though, have had to have been undeterred by Shakespeare's parody of such a procedure, in the 6-rhyme-word, 28-syllable stanzas of Pyramus – "But stay, O spite! / But mark, poor knight" – and Thisbe – "Asleep, my love? / What, dead, my dove?". These and Bottom's 8-rhyme-word, 32-syllable "The raging rocks" parody in Act 1, Scene 2, seem to show that Shakespeare himself found such densely rhymed verse ludicrous for themes of love and death, even if acceptable for a fairy's spell. Puck's five syllables per rhyme-word, and the parodic Pyramus and Thisbe's 4.3 and Bottom's four, are the closest Shakespeare came to the 3.875 of "Shall I die?" In his lyric stanzas elsewhere he ranges from six in songs in *As You Like It* to 8.75 in *The Winter's Tale*. But among other serious lyricists, at least two – Robert Jones in "A woman's looks" (4.4), in *Songes and Ayres* I 1, and Thomas Campion in "Ev'ry dame affects good fame" (4.25), in the *Fourth Booke of Ayres* v – approach the rhyme-density of "Shall I die?"

It is to the alleged evidential value of similar rhymes that we must turn next. We are told that twenty-eight pairs of rhyme-words occur 115 times between them elsewhere in Shakespeare's rhymed verse. That involves 230 lines out of at least 5,600 (the approximate total, taking only the non-dramatic verse: the true total is inaccessible to me but obviously considerably higher), of about 4 per cent. Taking the much smaller corpora of the sonnets of Daniel, Drayton, Sidney and Spenser again, we find the following occurrences of rhyme-pairs found in "Shall I die?":

Daniel: beauty/duty, ever/never (3), [illegible] mourn, love/prove (3), blot/[illegible] last/past, eyes/prize, find/[illegible] twelve instances involving [illegible] other of eight pairs in 24 cent of lines, or 3 per cent.

Drayton, *Idea*: love/prove (8), [illegible] made/trade, find/mind, [illegible] twelve instances of one [illegible] other of five pairs, in 26 [illegible] 896 lines, or 2.7 per cent.

Sidney: love/prove (12), annoy/joy (3), [illegible] pass (2), walk/talk, eyes/prize [illegible] meet/sweet, endure/sure, find/[illegible] (10), I/try – thirty-three instances [illegible] one or other of nine pairs, in 46 [illegible] 1,512 lines, or 4 per cent.

Spenser: beauty/duty, ever/never (2), [illegible] prove, love/dove, last/past, please/[illegible] treasure, find/wind, perfection/[illegible] tion, made/trade (2), awake/[illegible] find/mind (3) – sixteen instances [illegible] one or other of eleven pairs, in 52 [illegible] of 1,246 lines, or 2.5 per cent.

The much smaller samples must cause [illegible] diminution in the number of repetitions, [illegible] the limited numbers of rhymes that [illegible] further restricted by the subject-matter. [illegible] would obviously be too crude in this [illegible] simply to multiply proportionally, but it [illegible] not seem unlikely that on the grounds of [illegible] tion of rhyme-words these four poets [illegible] probably any other Elizabethan love-poe[illegible] are as strong candidates as Shakespeare for [illegible] authorship of "Shall I die?".

If the evidence presented is indeed the [illegible] fruit of what was conceived to be [illegible] accepted test of its authenticity, then there [illegible] been a fatal neglect of method, betrayed and [illegible] damningly in the results of applying even [illegible] very limited negative checks described in [illegible] article. The competitive urge to win a [illegible] uous prize may reduce scholarly investigation [illegible] a sort of academic hoop-la. When all the [illegible] paper publicity dies down, we will be left with [illegible] poem that at the most could be included in [illegible] section of Dubious: the unsupported anonymous [illegible] ascription indeed constitutes a suggestion [illegible] worth following up, and, in Taylor's words, [illegible] verbal parallels are "compatible with [illegible] Shakespeare's authorship", but a suggestion [illegible] and a possibility cannot reinforce each other [illegible] as to become a probability. The attribution [illegible] remains dubious. Do what you may, most ugly ducklings turn out to be ugly ducks, no [illegible] the Swan of Avon.

Gary Taylor will reply to this and to comments on his discovery (whether in the TLS or elsewhere) in an article in the TLS at the end of January.

Sotheby's music sale on November 29 had some outstanding items. (See *TLS* December 6.) Quite certainly the star lot in this auction was the autograph libretto of *Lohengrin* [illegible] unpublished first working draft dated 1845. As was usual with Wagner, he wrote the dramatic poem first before composing music for it, and the text of this draft is considerably different, especially in Acts I and III, from the printed libretto of 1850. Full of interesting corrections, deletions and additions the manuscript fetched £170,000. This was not the only important manuscript by Wagner in the sale, for it was preceded by his draft setting of "Attente" and his sketch for "Extase", both songs based on poems by Victor Hugo which reached their lower estimate of £15,000.

Other great composers were richly represented in the sale. Liszt, who conducted the première of *Lohengrin*, had a group of letters devoted to him (including his travelling alarm clock and rock-crystal desk-seal), among which was a letter from the composer to his cousin Eduard which touched on the triangular relationship between Liszt's daughter Cosima, her husband von Bülow and her lover Wagner. There were further important groups of material by Mahler including his autograph rewriting of the E flat clarinet part in Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony which was unsold at £7,800 against an estimate of £8,000–£10,000. The manuscript of Rossini's cantata in honour of Francis I's visit to Naples in 1819, due to its rarity, reached £35,000. An autograph manuscript of part of the slow movement of Haydn's quartet "The Rider" went for £15,000.

H. R. Woudhuysen

FOURTH 4th ESTATE

SHAKESPEARE'S LOST PLAY: EDMUND IRONSIDE

If the attribution of a 72-line poem to Shakespeare commands this much attention, what would happen if a 2060-line play were added to the canon? We can't wait for the reaction to the publication of *Shakespeare's Lost Play: Edmund Ironside*, edited by Eric Sams, on 30th January 1986.

Shakespeare's Lost Play: Edmund Ironside edited by Eric Sams, with Introduction, Text, Notes and Commentary.

ISBN 0 947795 95 2. 400 pp, £25. publication 30th January 1986.

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Backbiting

Alastair Forbes

MARK AMORY (Editor)
The Letters of Ann Fleming
448pp. Collins Harvill. £16.50.
0002170590

Justifying their publication of her letters, Mark Amory, her editing literary executor, and Mark Bonham Carter, his commissioning publisher, have called Ann Fleming "a legend to her friends". Only in so far as that word is often used to describe a person to whom imaginary or fictitious achievements or qualities are attributed does their book contrive to make that point. She was certainly never, as they claim, "the last of the great political hostesses", not even a particularly political hostess at all. Her "parties" (her table in her Victoria Square heyday seldom sat more than eight, an uncomfortably large number for general conversation and uncomfortably small for tete-à-tete asides) are said in gossip-column fashion to have been "attended by 'everybody'", and her drawing-room in the 1950s and 60s to have been "crowded (*sic*) by Labour politicians, Roy Jenkins, Hugh Gaitskell and Antony Crosland".

At best, as her talented younger kinswoman Emma Tennant has had to admit, these letters are "copycat writing that sag[s] as pastiche Waugh", and what Evelyn Waugh himself called "the awful strain" of writing humorous stuff all too often shows in his replies to Ann Fleming, which make up the bulk of this book, being what was discarded by Mr Amory when he was editing the novelist's correspondence five years ago, as simply not up to snuff. Certainly the ten or so pages Amory has included from Patrick Leigh Fermor, himself one of the best letter-writers in existence, make all else in his book save one letter from Cyril Connolly seem shoddy.

Some time before Waugh's "last undesired decade, when passion is cold, appetites feeble and curiosity dulled", he had written plaintively to Connolly (incidentally a one-time would-be purchaser of the Thunderbird sports car after which Ann's third husband, Ian Fleming, was always affectionately and never, except by his wife, derisively nicknamed) saying:

> I suffer much from lack of a pen-pal in London now that Nancy [Mitford] has left. If you ever have an idle 20 minutes, do dictate a page of social gossip. I have no idea what my friends or enemies are doing.

Cyril replied that he had "none of the qualifications. I don't find other people's misfortunes uproariously funny". Ann – who, in moments of candour rather rarer than Amory has persuaded himself existed, variously described herself as "a horrid bitch", a "shrew" and a "narky girl" – was ideally fitted to fill the post, always prepared to abuse family and friends behind their backs for Waugh's amusement, and sometimes going too far even for him. That admirable biographer and good friend to both Waugh and Ann, Lady Donaldson, told Amory that she found Ann's writing style as forced as her social manner, much preferring her in quieter one-to-one mood – as I did myself, particularly on country walks when she would not allow the observation of and delight in nature she had inherited from her kindly and charmingly innocent Charteris father to be swamped by London worldliness.

Ann's "Soul" grandmother, Mary (née Wyndham) Elcho, later Wemyss, to whom Arthur Balfour was all his life devoted – soul rather than body – was blessed with the great gift of being genuinely interested in everyone she met; a gift not, alas, handed down to Ann, whose own heavy heritage was rather Lord Wemyss's "constant fear of being bored" and his attachment to adultery as a way of life. What little learning she acquired came, as was usual then for most girls of her background, from schoolroom rather than school, for Cheltenham Ladies' College threw her out after only a single term on approval. Indeed she never really managed to discover what Sterne called "the North-West Passage to the intellectual world", and for all her regular Oxford gigs in middle age she never achieved more than groupie status to a small coterie of fond-of-dining-out dons and Heads of Colleges. Her salon more often looked and sounded like Madame Verdurin's than Lady Desborough's little evenings for Granny Wemyss, Arthur Balfour and Oscar Wilde, though she was quite capable of equalling Oriane de Guermantes's hardness of heart to the mortally sick Swann whenever death or illness or talk of it looked like impinging on her social arrangements – as witness her letter to the angelic wife of her brilliant novelist brother, Hugo, giving these as her excuse for not writing sooner to offer sympathy at their loss by drowning of an adored three-year-old first-born son:

> I should have written sooner but there was a rush of plans for holidays, a promotion party for Noël Coward, a television party to get funds for children's hospital and all the other dementia of Warwick Hut.

Mr Amory has wrongly attributed to Ann the magic of the California-born Lady Cunard, at whose much more memorable table long ago I first met her. Ann had herself seen what that fastidious diarist, James Lees-Milne, so admired in Emerald Cunard: "her lightning perception, her wide reading, her brilliant repartee, her deft manipulation of the conversation, her sense of fun and sparkling, delicious, wonderful nonsense", but she never came near equalling any of them. Amory gives as an unimpressive example of Ann's table-talk, her question to a successful middle-aged novelist, "Why are you a homosexual?" As Tristram Shandy's father would have cried, "Did ever a woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?" Her insularity and visceral xenophobia, with a strongly stressed anti-Americanism and a sometimes covert, at other times overt, anti-semitism, her ignorance of world affairs and her low boredom-threshold, made a wide range of topics anathema to her.

Esmond Harmsworth (later Rothermere) was, apart from being richer and more handsome, just as nice a chap as the popular peer of ancient Irish lineage, Shane O'Neill, who had married her two years after the grand coming-out ball given for her by her rich Tennant aunt the Duchess of Rutland (who then, as now, thought that Ann's younger sister Laura, today Marlborough, was "the one with the warm heart"); and had given her the delightful son and daughter who, thanks largely to their cherishing by an imperturbable nanny whom in childhood they found much easier to love than their mother, have since grown up into very good eggs and parents. Esmond (for Ann was never miserly with such disclosures) was the first and possibly the only man in her life to give her sexual satisfaction, though it is clear that she became deeply involved with others, particularly Ian Fleming for whom she had conceived a fatally obsessive and possessive passion (alas, she unfortunately never found it possible to *like* him). (Amory absurdly states that "Ian was not enthusiastic about sport", when in fact this former Victor Ludorum who had first strained his heart at Eton and later further strained it undersea fishing was hardly ever off the golf course until the day of his death, in earlier years often in the company of both of Ann's first two husbands.)

Both before and after O'Neill's death in action in Italy, Ann's *cavalière servente* Fleming was seldom absent even from Rothermere family Christmases. Yet, as she has in a letter to admit, Rothermere, even despite the worse-than-Grimm-standards-wicked-stepmother role she positively gloried in playing to the good-looking children of his first marriage (the at that time very vulnerable young son and heir being treated with specially damaging cruelty), continued to love her in his understated fashion.

His letters to Ann make clear that Fleming (who in youth, seemingly unbeknown to Amory, had, as Cyril Connolly put it, wanted to marry the girl he was in love with at least as much as Romeo did Juliet), though reluctant to have to break off an affair which had gone well for a few years, was even more reluctant to marry her. Her letters to him, as well as about him to others, show that she was *à sa proie toute entière attachée*. She knew that her third marriage could not work unless "I can discipline myself to be led instead of leading", but this she found too late she could not do, subsequently sighing self-pityingly that "Alas, unselfishness should be practised when young, it was too late to sacrifice myself and live to please Ian . . . I am very unhappy", to which Ian could only answer "How can you expect me to make you happy when I'm not happy myself?" – echoes of Vronsky to another and more touching Anna.

Ian Fleming's massive heart-attack (after which his life became that of a semi-invalid, albeit one with a death-wish desire to disobey his doctors' tedious prescriptions for prolonging his threatened days) occurred in 1961, and was no doubt in some part brought on by a worrying injunction for plagiarism served on him shortly before. But this breakdown in his health had other causes. A few days earlier, Ann, in her regular bulletin to Waugh, had brought up for the umpteenth time the name of Hugh Gaitskell, suggesting that she had heard that all at Combe Florey "doted on" the Leader of the Opposition, and asking him if this could be true (Waugh promptly replied "Gaitskell no friend, nor of my children"). Ann continued:

> I sometimes walk with him in remote parks, he wears dark spectacles and tells me his problems while my mind wanders and I watch the spring mating of the ducks – when I hear him say "By the way, that's top secret", I ask him to tell me that bit again, but it's seldom very exciting – and, by the way, *that's all TOP SECRET*.

(Anthony Powell, unkindly and absurdly misjudged by Ann in her letters like so many other of her intellectual superiors, can hardly be alone in having found this "Madam, will you walk and talk with me" passage "not without interest", as he characteristically put it, in the light of *l'affaire* Keays–Parkinson.) Two years before, Gaitskell had fretted about Ann's first Labour politician friend, Roy Jenkins (whose wife Jennifer she thought "far more formidable than Roy, not handicapped by the desire to please"), saying of him that he "is very much in the social swim these days and I am sometimes anxious about him and young Tony [Crosland]", little guessing that he was himself being sucked deep into the maelstrom. In fact Gaitskell was becoming, first infatuated in a harmless, twenty-year-itch sort of way, and then totally "bewitched, bothered and bewildered" by Ann Fleming, who herself begins to drag his name into her letters in that particular way people are so often apt to do when love or adultery or both are in the air. Gaitskell, one of the nicest men ever to enter British politics, most happily married to his charming and intelligent wife Dora (a perfect consort for a politician), father of two delightful and adored daughters, became Ann's prize catch, and she his weak spot and potential Achilles' heel. Their liaison was known to most of London and Oxford, but, perhaps thanks to Crosland's complicity for much longer hidden from his wife, who, like Ian Fleming, was slow to realize how far it had gone, despite the fact that Gaitskell seemed to turn up wherever Ann happened to be, in Ireland, Italy, France or the Caribbean. There is no doubt that Ian Fleming was shocked to discover that Ann, foiled as an influential political hostess, had become a political mistress, for there equally seems little doubt that Gaitskell was "the married man" with whom Amory repeatedly states that Ann was having an affair in the 1960s. To him this seemed altogether too far a cry from the cosy triangular *parties de plaisir* with O'Neill and Harmsworth and it must have been a contributory psychological factor to the illness that spoilt and shortened his life.

These were years in which it was most desirable that there should be a consensus between the two main political parties about the change in Britain's position in the world, and about the need to concert policies with the European mainland that had been so shortsightedly spurned in the name of illusory "special relationships" elsewhere. Having seen Gaitskell, whom I greatly liked, at close quarters at this time, I had no doubt that it was in no small measure Ann's petticoat influence and flattery that culminated in the shamingly silly speech he made about "a thousand years of English history" having convinced him that his country should not join the European Community (over which, ironically, Roy Jenkins would later for a while preside) – quite as silly as Anthony Eden's own objections, which, he told his compatriots, he simply "felt in my bones". Little wonder that Ann in 1960 found that Eden's "views are identical to Gaitskell's". The illness of one and the death of the other swept them into the dustbin of history. What might have happened if Gaitskell had survived to win the election one trembles to think. Gaitskell's marriage would have taken the strain but perhaps his Government might not have.

Ian Fleming died, literally a broken-hearted man, having repented at leisure his marriage so unhastily contracted and watched with dismay his wife's upbringing of his beautiful son, Caspar. He had been persuaded to pawn for cash half of James Bond's earning capacity, to Booker McConnell, at the outset of that firm's diversification into literature's realms of gold. His will stated that the Bond income should go exclusively to his son. Ann was in despair at the prospect of the loss of her former ease, and soon in no doubt of her luck in being introduced to Arnold Goodman, who saw to it that Caspar's mother should continue to receive very large sums indeed from the 007 industry (about which she found everything filthy save its lucre). As a younger man, Lord Goodman had been unlucky in love, but he has always remained fond of both women and children. He quite fell under the spell of Ann who, though excited by the money his skill had reunited her with – a service for which he chivalrously never sent her a bill – rashly, as she later realized, refused his only proposal of marriage. It was probably not because he learnt that she thought nothing of making cruel fun of him behind his back (as she indeed did of anybody she claimed to be her friend) that he never gave her another chance to accept him, though he must, even before the publication of this dreadful book, often have counted his escape a lucky one.

Both before and after Ian's death and Caspar's suicide, Ann had got stuck on what Ian had called "this tragic switchback of pills which I implore you to stop". She had also taken to drink. These much muddling dependencies made it harder for her to make new friends and easier to quarrel with old ones, and she managed to do both. She hankered sometimes for the lighted candles of old, once begging me to help her make up a quarrel she had had with George Weidenfeld. "But I thought you hated

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WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON

him" I said. "I do," she replied, "but where else nowadays can I see friends or meet new people?"

Of Virginia Woolf's perfectly edited and footnoted Letters, Isaiah Berlin, so we lately learned from Stephen Spender, said that they "left one with a feeling that she was not so nice as one had thought previously", to which Spender Spenderishly replied that "after all, it was an honour to be mentioned by her at all". "That's the line we have to take", said Berlin, who had been described in one of them as "a violent Jew". David Garnett thought Virginia Woolf's reputation "as rather a malicious person" well deserved, and told of the time when

> Adrian Stephen, Vanessa and Clive Bell and several others suddenly discovered they were no longer on speaking terms. So Adrian called on them and said "something's wrong between us – it must be the Goat" – Virginia's nickname. He got everyone to write down what Virginia had said about the others. We met and read the notes aloud – and from that time Virginia's power was broken for ever.

But compared to Virginia Woolf's letters, Ann Fleming's are rubbish, and the footnotes of Mark Amory, compiled, as he says, with his publisher Mark Bonham Carter's "shaping, advice and encouragement", are a disgrace next to the painstaking work of Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann or Mrs Quentin Bell.

Reviewing the latest volume of the *Diary of Beatrice Webb*, Ann Fleming's friend Roy Jenkins remarked that he had "counted mistakes and solecisms running well into double figures in the bridging notes" and gently pointed out that "the raison d'être of notes is to be accurate". At a first appraisal of the index of this book, I spotted two dozen such easily avoidable mistakes and solecisms. As for the inept, inapt, inaccurate, invariably point-missing footnotes, and the large number of persons and matters which no attempt has been made, either through ignorance or sloth or both, to identify or explain, I counted by half-way through a further fifty mistakes and solecisms before giving up. As for Ann herself, the charitable posthumous reputation she had on *all sides been granted now gone for good, I seem to hear her teasing voice from the corner* of the Sevenhampton churchyard her skeleton shares with those of Ian and Caspar crying, "Why couldn't those beastly Marks Twain have let the sleeping bitch lie?"

Gamekeeper or poacher?

Craig Brown

JAMES LEES-MILNE
Midway on the Waves
248pp. Faber. £10.95.
0571 13723 7

It is only to be expected that a leading figure in the National Trust should open his diaries to the public, charge a substantial admission fee, and then place ostentatious red ropes across most of the private side. "Chips imparted some astounding information not to be recorded, alas, but which will be remembered" is one entry; "I made a confession which greatly disconcerted A." – without an inkling of what the confession was – is another. At times, this fourth volume, *Midway on the Waves*, becomes so distanced from its author/subject that one begins to suspect that we are not in the stately home at all, but in some modern annexe filled with twinkling souvenirs for the general public.

The General Public! More usually referred to by James Lees-Milne as "the lower classes", "the proletariat" or "the common people", they float in a mass on an incoming tide, drawing ever closer as Lees-Milne and his circle watch the castles – *their* castles – disintegrate. "We felt quite sick from the nonsense of it all", he writes, describing a visit to an adult education college in 1948. "At a time when this country is supposed to be bankrupt they spend (our) money on semi-education of the lower classes who will merely learn from it how to be dissatisfied." But is Lees-Milne, signing up castles to the National Trust, a poacher or a gamekeeper? Most of the book is related, however vaguely, to his work for the National Trust, but his mission is clearly to preserve the homes and their owners by recourse to obligatory visitors rather than anything more revolutionary.

At first glance, *Midway on the Waves* and its preceding volumes might be classified as Agreeable Literature, that is, books written by, about and for the upper-class and middle-brow, full of passing and interchangeable references to books and to meals, all "delightful" or "delicious" or, worst of all, "highly civilized". Agreeable Literature tends to be reviewed by those who feature in it and read by those who would like to have featured in it. Lees-Milne's diaries qualify on all these counts. The four reviewers quoted on the dust-jacket of *Midway on the Waves* are all to be found in the index as well. The author is a great socialite ("To a cocktail party given by Mrs Foley in Eaton Square to see the Stoke Edith needlework hangings in her drawing room") and an aesthete in all those areas concerning comfort. He writes about the spiritual as if it were a romance ("I immediately fell head over heels in love with him", he writes after meeting Pope Pius XII) and of romance as if it were the darkest of secrets. He writes with the superior joy of one who has never got over his luck at being both English and Etonian. And yet there is something lingering at the back of these diaries that is too honest to allow them to remain wholly Agreeable Literature, something true and personal and a little frightened.

Behind the pomposity, perhaps encouraging it, lies some sort of muddle. At one moment, his is the voice of his privileged class, damning the proletariat, hobnobbing with the titled, appreciating art for the reassurance it offers, but at the next moment he is nervous and self-conscious. "I believe my generation to be, for the most part, 'unreal', cliquey, dated, prejudiced, out of touch with the new world and preposterously exclusive – arrogant, arrogant, with few redeeming qualities of any kind . . . . Am I one of them?" When he tackles profundity, it trips him up: "It is strange how love unfolds itself like a gigantic scroll of which only the lettering immediately under the eyes is readable, the rest being lost in misty lines"; and when he attempts to tie his conclusions together, he loses the thread: "The triumph of love consists, not in winning, but enduring. Marriage is a very unnatural state. But then so are logic and art unnatural. All the most worthwhile and glorious things achieved by mankind are unnatural. To be natural is to be animal." Those in search of aphorisms will find little more than a struggle, but the admission of struggle may well redeem the author as a diarist, may turn what Lees-Milne describes in the introduction as a "trivial life" into something more awkward and interesting, so that after the first four titles – *Ancestral Voices*, *Prophesying Peace*, *Caves of Ice* and *Midway on the Waves* – the fifth, if there is a fifth, need not be called *Beware! Beware!*.

A peer at the wheel

T. C. Barker

PAUL TRITTON
John Montagu of Beaulieu: Motoring pioneer and prophet
291pp. Leicester: Golden Eagle. £9.50.
0901 48232 3

There is much more in this book than motors and motoring, even though these became the future second Lord Montagu's abiding passion. He was not just a spectator but an active participant. As a schoolboy he pedalled a hard-tyred tricycle from Eton to his father's house in central London, over twenty miles away, in two-and-a-half hours. Before he went up to Oxford, he used his father's influence to ride on the footplate of expresses between Southampton and London and, as an undergraduate, took a job at Nine Elms locomotive depot at 11s 6d a week, living in working-class lodgings nearby: Toynbee Hall principles but from rather different motives.

With the coming of motors he of course became an enthusiastic motorist and, when aeroplanes began to fly, a great supporter of aviation. (Motor boats came in between.) He became a leading light in the Automobile Club and used his influence in politics, first in the Commons and then, after 1905, in the Lords, to advocate better roads, greater freedom for motorists and more aeroplanes for military and civilian use. During the First World War, when he served in India, he prophesied regular air services from Britain within ten years, to everyone's disbelief; and he happened to be motoring across the desert to the Persian oilfields just ten years later when an Imperial Airways plane flew from London to Delhi.

Paul Tritton, a public relations consultant, has done his research well, much of it among the vast and well-organized resources assembled at Beaulieu by the present Lord Montagu, son of the subject of this biography, and born when his father was sixty-one. The book is well and aptly illustrated, with other topics as well as cars. It lacks, however, any serious discussion of business matters. Montagu's interests in Southern Africa and insurance companies at home receive only incidental mention. It is hard to judge how important they were to him. There are hints that, like Robert Cecil before he became third Marquess of Salisbury, he lacked a private income and was driven to earn his own living. Local influence secured him a seat in Parliament, but he found himself before long glad to act as a general reporter on the *Daily Mail*, thanks to the influence of his friend Alfred Harmsworth, the future Lord Northcliffe, another prominent motorist. In 1902 Harmsworth encouraged him to launch and edit *Car Illustrated*, which continued to be his main concern for many years. Yet, despite the growing popularity of the subject, broadened to take account of other transport developments, its promoter was unable to make a financial success of the venture, though he did manage to keep it alive. When he came into his father's landed property and investments, these do not seem to have helped him as much as one might have expected and he certainly did not distinguish himself in developing this inheritance. During the difficult years after the First World War nearly all the income from Beaulieu was spent in its upkeep and he still depended for day-to-day expenses on journalism. Montagu's success has in fact come with his son, who has capitalized so professionally upon his inheritance and upon the Montagu reputation in the motoring world which his father had established.

Lack of adequate discussion of business matters is more than offset, however, by the frank treatment of his private life, in a way that greatly widens the book's appeal. Montagu's close relationship with Eleanor Thornton, who was very much concerned from the outset with *Car Illustrated* and is described here as "talented, intelligent, ambitious and free living" (she was probably the model for the Rolls-Royce radiator mascot "Spirit of Ecstasy") resulted in a child being born to them a year later. The girl, her birth apparently unregistered despite the law, was fostered. Everything was kept a close secret and neither parent would have seen Joan Thornton as she grew up if her mother, to whom Montagu remained devoted, had not died under tragic circumstances. Montagu, returning to duty in India in 1915, took Eleanor with him for part of the voyage, ostensibly to help him with the completion of a report he was writing. The ship was torpedoed. She was swept from him on the deck and drowned. He was rescued, but only after many hours in an unseaworthy boat and being given up for lost. (He had the unusual experience of being able to read his obituary in *The Times*.) Grief-stricken, he traced his daughter and befriended her, admitting their relationship only in a letter sent to her after his death. By an extraordinary series of accidents, she came to reveal the whole story only in 1969, and her own death ten years later made possible its publication. Tritton, checking and adding to it from his own research, tells it with taste and understanding. For many readers the motors will almost be forgotten after the final part of this at times too detailed but remarkable book about an energetic, straightforward and, on the whole, endearing personality.

On the move

Alan Bell

MERLIN WATERSON (Editor)
The Country House Remembered: Recollections of life between the wars
256pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £12.95.
0710203764

This enterprising compilation is an exercise in what is now known as "élite" oral history, to distinguish it from the interviewing of those who would find written reminiscence impossible. Merlin Waterson has marshalled a team of dowagers – average age well over seventy-nine, and several of them born in the last century – to recall country-house life between the two world wars. Their memories, which are of varying quality and interest, with the interlocutors' questions pruned away, have been loosely arranged under somewhat overlapping chapter headings, and the result is cheerfully illustrated from family albums (themselves so much a feature of country-house life) with pictures of wages books as well as of dinner-tables, house parties and herbaceous borders.

The editor has succeeded very well in catching the confident tone of voice of his contributors, with emphatic repetitions, a vigorous affection about favourite servants ("the butler, Frederick, was the nicest fellow that ever walked" is typical), and a strong sense of "people like us" knowing each other in a great network of landed proprietorship. Whatever the uniformities of tone, there is certainly great variation in the size of establishment. Melford Hall in Suffolk, for example, is very different in size and style from the vast Westminster mansions recalled by Loelia, Lady Lindsay of Dowhill. To her, as the second Duke of Westminster's new young bride, Eaton seemed "this endless corridor", and it was impossible for the chatelaine to relax completely when having to move so frequently between her various residences, especially on the ducal yachts – one of which had a crew of [illegible] the other was a converted destroyer. But there was a strong sense of local communal identity on other properties, their owners devoted to the local Bench, and the recollection of one peer choosing to sit at the back of his church [illegible] us to worship "with my men".

The servant problem, lowest common factor of generations of lairdly conversation, constantly recurs, with governesses teased or adored, perpetual rumblings between butlers and cooks, and almost invariably disobliging head gardeners, MacAllisters to a man. The First World War had already seen major cutbacks in stuff, both indoors and outdoors, and Edwardian plenty was nostalgically recollected; but the reductions were nothing compared with the decimations of the Second World War, after which much courage and ingenuity, and the resilience of a younger generation, were needed to maintain the houses.

The transitional period recorded here has a special interest, not least in the continuities of life. At Flete, electric lights were brought in at dusk every day, a relic of days when the lamps had to be filled and trimmed; and relations of Church and gentry still had a decidedly old-fashioned ring. The Revd Lord Manners [illegible] voy was publicly reproved during service by his brother and patron the Marquess of [illegible] when he made some imprudent intercession for the League of Nations: "Let's have none of these mumbo-jumbo prayers, Manners. Go on, stick to the book."

The First World War, which made such inroads on heirs and servants alike, had, together with penal taxation and death duties, produced some sense of insecurity and the inevitability of change. Lady Dashwood (who married in 1922) recalled being asked by her mother, "'Why don't you let your maid put on your shoes for you darling?' and I said, 'Because I'm quite sure this isn't going on for ever, and I don't want to have to learn to put on my shoes when I'm old.'"

Harold Macmillan's autobiographical account of Christmas at Chatsworth in the 1920s is one of seventy-odd passages, factual or fictional, in prose or verse, concerning Christmas, recently published in *The Christmas Reader*, compiled and introduced by Godfrey Smith (328pp. Viking. £9.95. 0 670 80814 8), many of them suggested by readers of his *Sunday Times* column.

From the bookmakers'

Howard Jacobson

The first funny thing about books produced especially for Christmas is how unfunny they mostly are. The second funny thing is the idea itself that Christmas and funny books somehow go together. This idea seems to be based on several erroneous assumptions about the nature of the family, festivity, reading habits, and mirth; and is, I suspect, of recent origin. Perhaps I am merely demonstrating my own failure of historical imagination, but it is only with the greatest difficulty that I am able to envisage the great medieval scribes and illuminators switching suddenly to humorous anecdote and caricature in time to meet the demands of the Christmas market thirty-five years on. Even Dickens, whose eye for the seasonal and the commercial might make a packager blink with envy, knew that Christmas was when you made 'em cry rather than when you made 'em laugh. Not that there isn't plenty to cry over in what I've been reading.

Do you want to be a more successful after-dinner speaker? Then don't talk too long, don't read directly from a script, keep a handkerchief close by, and intersperse your address with such quotations as, "The most difficult year of marriage is the one you're in", or such jokes as, "'Will you have red wine or white wine, sir?' a waiter asked in a restaurant. 'It doesn't matter at all to me', said the diner, 'I'm colour blind.'" This is the advice of Gyles Brandreth, who should know. Laugh at that.

Cockburn's A–Z of After-Dinner Entertainment – entertainment because Mr Brandreth includes a few party games alongside the tips for vibrant after-dinner speaking – is a typical Christmas package, in that one couldn't imagine ever buying it for oneself, couldn't imagine ever buying it for someone else, and yet it is, or looks just like, the book one has been seeing in the non-book section of all bookshops for as long as one has been Christmas shopping. The tradition of the made-up book that no one wants might not go back to the monastic scribes or even Dickens, but it seems to go all the way back to one's youth. There is a timeless quality about all this, a familiarity of design, format, smell and content.

And the old-fashionedness is compounded, this year, by the current fad for self-conscious young-fogeydom, strait-lacedness, behind-the-timesness, and unabashed nostalgic conservatism. I've never fully – or should I say I've never partially – grasped why anyone would want to read a *Guinness Book of Records*, but I understand still less what they'd want with a *Mackeson Book of Averages*. Except that being average is in at the moment. Dullness is fun. Ponderosity is all the rage. Peter Freedman celebrates Dull Pride in his *Glad to be Grey*, where you can find anti-lists, as it were, of the least vital examples of everything – eg, Val Doonican, Switzerland and the Volvo. The trouble with this particular game is that it implies, if only temporarily, that Madonna, the Hindu Kush and the Porsche are therefore interesting. It also implies the very opposite of that, of course, and Peter Freedman is frequently in danger of becoming more complex than a dull person has any right to be. Whether there's a funny book in the fashionable reversal of the fashionable is another matter.

The same question has to be asked about Pelham Witherspoon (if you'd believe that you'd believe anything) whose *The Drink-Spotty Book* provides a glossary to Sloane-speak, ie, the language of those who are dull but don't know it. I'm not at all sure that the precise delineation of the Sloane Ranger in our time has been anything but counter-productive. Since they were first spotted and ringed their numbers have swollen disproportionately.

"*Yours in haste*"; *taken from Ronald Searle's* Golden Oldies 1941–1961 *(144pp. Pavilion. £8.95. 1 85145 102 1).*

Now they really do board your bus at Sloane Square – not the stop before or even the stop after – and exaggerate their mannerisms on the off-chance that there's a Sloannithologist listening in. Pelham Witherspoon has a strornreh gourd ear for them, but one wants to know more than that they all say "MWAH" when they kiss at parties. One wants to know what it means that they have lost confidence in the sound of their own lips, and why they must now verbalize an action which at an earlier stage of development might have been urgent, silent and profound. A non-Christmas investigation into the phenomenon is looked for.

Book-making rather than book-writing is what you get at Christmas. Thus, lovers of the queenly cadences of Arthur Marshall might well be disappointed when they go to their stocking in the morning and discover that *Giggling in the Shrubbery* (not to be confused with the earlier *Whimpering in the Rhododendrons*) is an anthology of other people's reminiscences of the good old days of girls' schools – those of the good old girls themselves – prefaced, gathered in and linked by Arthur, but not, in the strictest sense, written by him. That needn't be a bar to enjoyment. I myself can never tire of hearing that girls were once warned against wearing patent leather shoes because of what might be reflected therein; and the following is a word of advice from which all women might profit yet:

> Should a young lady go to a party or ball, she should always have about her person a telephone directory or other large book. Then, if a lift home in a car or carriage was proffered and it became necessary for the young lady to sit on the gentleman's knee, because of crowding, then the book should first be placed on the gentleman's knee, before seating herself, thus avoiding any embarrassment to either.

Neither the bubbling archness of Arthur Marshall's prose, nor his stylized backward-looking regretfulness – "From long ago and far away there comes an instance of an innocence that, one feels, can exist no more" – is quite up to taking the measure of the convoluted dirty-mindedness of respectability. But then a book which engaged with that wouldn't be suitable Christmas reading either.

Mind you, *Tarbuck on Showbiz* gets in, and his reflections on the likes of Diana Dors, Kenny Lynch and Frank Sinatra, shot through with philosophizings of the "It undoubtedly takes all sorts" variety, are not always consonant with the spirit of seasonal goodwill. It is a book full of name droppings, names of famous persons' car droppings, numbers of times one has been introduced to royalty droppings, and entertaining insights into what showbiz folk get up to on their days off. An American woman, coming upon Jimmy Tarbuck playing pontoon with Tommy Steele on an Intercity 125, gets told that the game is called Bollocks Pontoon. If a player gets twenty-one he calls out "Bollocks!" "Later I thought with delight of this nice lady saying to her English hosts: 'I met Tommy Steele on the train. He and his friends were playing a fascinating card game called Bollocks Pontoon.'" What larks.

Altogether different from these books which are not really books at all, is something like the *Pick of Punch*. An annual that creams off the best examples of work already done – done, too, in the dog days, for an audience not full on turkey and steamed pudding, nor wearing party hats – belongs to an entirely more honourable tradition. This is the equivalent to turning up to collect your Christmas tip after a year of good and unobtrusive service.

The same can be said of Miles Kington's *Moreover, Too*, a collection of pieces from his *Times* column. No fair-weather trading here. This chap's been out in all seasons. Why Miles Kington hasn't yet appealed to the European Parliament or the Ombudsman or whoever looks out for jobbing humorists, I don't know. But it strikes me as mental cruelty of the most excruciating kind to ask a man to be amusing five days a week for five years. No one is ever required to be *serious* quite so consistently – even Bernard Levin takes breaks. It's hardly surprising then that Mr Kington's fancy is occasionally a trifle strained, or that old faithfuls such as lost socks in washing machines spin again before our eyes. The miracle is that any invention is left at all.

It would be naive to wonder why publishers bother to load their already creaking catalogues with Christmas fodder. Horses, for courses. But one could argue that this would be an excellent time of the year for them to rescue their year-round authors languishing in their lists, and to give them a push in the direction of Santa's bag – if only as an earnest of their Christian goodfellowship.

Gyles Brandreth: *Cockburn's A–Z of After-Dinner Entertainment*. 149pp. Pelham. £4.95. 0 7207 1618 8.
Robert Porter (Editor): *Mackeson Book of Averages*. 159pp. Deutsch. £4.95pp. 0 233 97844 5.
Peter Freedman: *Glad to be Grey*. 120pp. Routledge. £8.95. 0 7102 0452 1.
Pelham Witherspoon: *The Drink-Spotty Book*. 122p. Bantam. £4.95. 0 593 01007 8.
Arthur Marshall (Editor): *Giggling in the Shrubbery*. 198pp. Collins. £8.95. 0 00 217153 8.
Jimmy Tarbuck: *Tarbuck on Showbiz*. 120pp. Collins Willow. £7.95. 0 00 218190 8.
Alan Coren (Editor): *Pick of Punch*. 192pp. Hutchinson. £8.95. 0 09 161940 8.
Miles Kington: *Moreover, Too*. 176pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 00 8540 8.

From the embassy

E. S. Turner

LAWRENCE DURRELL
Antrobus Complete
202pp. Faber. £8.95.
0571 13602 8

Literary quiz question: which well-known novelist sends a susceptible American novelist to Egypt on leave with Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* under his arm, and brings him back, thoroughly Muslimized, with a string of little black wives, saying "Durrell's right. Down there everything goes"? The answer, of course, is Lawrence Durrell, and the incident occurs in one of his rightly esteemed Antrobus stories. His cheek is to be admired as much as his resolve not to be awed by his own reputation. In these very funny "sketches from diplomatic life" he is like an air traffic controller who relaxes from juggling with jumbos by tossing round the light stuff, which can be even dodgier to handle.

The Antrobus tales first came out in enneads, to use a word airily thrown up by a Faber blurb-writer; that is, in sets of nine. In 1974 the three slender volumes *Esprit de Corps*, *Stiff Upper Lip* and *Sauve Qui Peut* were ransacked to produce the still-slender *The Best of Antrobus*; and now we have *Antrobus Complete*, by no means a damned thick book, though one ennead ahead of *The Best*. The first volume was dedicated to "the members of the Chancery, H.M. Embassy, Belgrade, 1951". Many of the adventures vouched for by the deprecatory Antrobus have a Balkan setting, suggestive of Evelyn Waugh's *Scott-King's Modern Europe*. Here are calamitous *vins d'honneur* and *trains d'honneur*, along with wanton manifestations of culture which, as Antrobus warns, can spread like mumps ("All culture corrupts, but French culture corrupts absolutely"). Yet it is a world of curious innocence; the Ambassador, Polk-Mowbray, is never called on to apologize for British soccer fans and nobody worries about defections and leaks. To be sure, there is a character called Ponting, but he is only a drunken press officer, permanently *en poste*.

Nor do the emotional lives of the "dips" cause undue scandal, though there is concern over Dovebasket's *Love Songs of an Assistant Military Attaché*, with preface by Havelock Ellis. More disturbing is the behaviour of Aubrey de Mandeville, the Third Secretary with a Phantom Rolls and dubious chauffeur. Between them, master and servant demonstrate Morris-dancing, cross-gartered and dripping with ear-rings, and then a Snow Maidens' can-can, which is ruled Distasteful and Unacceptable. Unlike that ancestor of the Mitford girls, none of Polk-Mowbray's staff has to witness a ceremonial act of hara-kiri, but there is panic when a volunteer is sought to attend a Kurdish "joyful circumcision" ceremony. One sees why *Playboy* printed this story, though did not the editors feel cheated by the dénouement?

In the tale about the Balkan English-language newspaper run on a shoestring by two English spinsters (a wonderful idea) the invention becomes a little mechanical and one very old jest is given sanctuary. But all is forgiven for the story of the ambassador's nephew who, reduced to carrying his aunt's skeleton dressed in a raincoat about Paris, sits her on an omnibus seat reserved for *mutilés de guerre* and assures the conductor she is a casualty of the Somme.

Durrell's style in these sketches has been likened to that of Sir Harold Nicolson teamed with Wodehouse, but some may nominate Peter Fleming (with all those capital letters) rather than Nicolson. If the plots are wild, the manner is disciplined and the wit elegant. There are some captivating conceits: "[The Ambassador] groaned and moved from side to side, as if he were representing Colic in a charade"; "[the saluting gun] would give a hoarse boom at sunset while a pair of blue underpants, which had been used from time immemorial as wadding for the blank charge, would stiffen themselves out on the sky"; "[The embassy cat] was at the top of the elm tree, quietly, effortlessly, brilliantly fielding sparrows as they passed". Perhaps Durrell is really the cat up the tree? Marc, succeeding Nicolas Bentley as illustrator, turns in some well-perceived clubland heroes. Bald-headed Comrade Bubok is given a fine head of hair, but when did illustrators ever read the text?

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Charles Scribner's Sons, New York
is proud to present one set of
THE DICTIONARY OF THE MIDDLE AGES
to Dr. Peter Linehan, 1985 winner of the Antiquary Prize Essay Competition.
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Remainders

Eric Korn

List, list, o list . . . .

As a card-carrying obsessional I'm a little shocked by people who make lists of things for fun, though I know listing goes back to the Ark, I mean to the *Iliad*, Book II, to Chronicles, to Sumerian King-Lists; Linear B-ites had a literature consisting of nothing but lists, unless you believe that they also wrote roistering picaresque novels on some surfaces now lost to us, exquisite *haiku* on some leaves that have all rolled up and blown away.

Books of Lists are now an established genre, with rules, precise canonical forms, grandiose opportunities and one ever-present danger, the danger of course of giving out a tedium-blast so powerful, so Gorgonian, that just open one page in library or bookshop and whap! you are Lot's-wifed with *ennui* where you stand. (Chap in Dillon's tells me they have to bundle three or four customer-petrifacts but into the street every night. Always gone in the morning, some League of Rescue comes and clears them away, there's a grove of stiff-bored people somewhere on the Berkshire Downs, grows four acres a year, may rebalance the ecology.)

Some lists, compiled and processed by computers, are so tiresome that even the authors don't read them; thus fabulous nonsense gets printed on expensive Unesco-funded paper, enshrined in data-banks around the world. (I once saw a book of statistics that claimed the male-female birth ratio in the UK was 4.3 males to every female, or perhaps the other way around: you couldn't miss it, for it was underlined and capitalized and repeated in some separate table of High and Low, or rather HI and LO, and no one human had come along and said "Hang about, it isn't so.")

What people like are arbitrary lists. Chatty lists, lists of whimsical non-expertise. Marcel Proust's World All-time Cricket XI; Ian Botham's seven favourite structuralists. Well, I've got two more here. Impossible to review, will merely announce them. Russell Ash's *Londoner's Almanac* (Century, £2.95): quirky, (London Zoo adoption charges, 10 commonest complaints in museums), intriguing (ten best modern murals, seven unusual deaths); largely useless (except for list of Telephone Exchange Names and their current numerical equivalents, bits of poetry – Gulliver Vigilant Enterprise Primrose – zombies at B.Telecom want to suppress), highly recommended.

The *Book of Literary Lists* (Sidgwick and Jackson, £9.95) is by Nicholas Parsons (an exiled scholar living in Vienna). It is lusher, more concerned with money; too often too serious (not always: Quentin Crisp's Desert Island list includes a long-playing record crying "Help!" but Tolstoy and Henry Miller go on a bit); there's entertaining stuff on censorship, burned books, burned authors, and Judith Stinton's *Nine Clues to Racism and Sexism in Children's Books* ("watch for loaded words like inscrutable, brotherhood, man-made": she recommends "manufactured" and wild horses – I keep two here for the purpose – would not lead me to ask what the man is doing there).

There are lists of favourites from Clare Francis and Dick Francis (*Riddle of the Sands* and *Handley Cross*, as you might have guessed), the most implausible book titles (not very), various people's recipes for writing detective stories (I don't want to). There are also, inevitably you will say, mistakes, and I meanly composed a List of Ten Things Nicholas Parsons Really Should Have Checked Up On:

1. *Origin of Species* was not published in 1840.
2. *Leaves of Grass* was not published in 1833.
3. E. V. Knox did not parody "The Stately Homes of England" in 1881.
4. The public edition of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* did not come out in 1926.

5–9. The oldest known written text is not "375BC, Sumerian papyri written in Aramic found near Jericho".

10. *The Well of Loneliness* was not first published as a Penguin.

* * *

Yes, it's EUROPOOH.

I beg your pardon?

Europooh. I have in front of me *Winnie-the-Pooh and Tigger Too* (Hippo Scholastic Book Services of London, Illustrations Copyright Walt Disney, made and printed by Printer industria grafica s.a. Barcelona, translated by Anthea Bell). Translated? From Spanish? Catalan? An Old Provençal *trouvère* ballade, *Li Hums del Pu*? No from Ravensburger Taschenbücher's *Die Geschichten vom Tigger*. There is a full page of copyright names and addresses, Gosford New South Wales, Marua Road, Auckland, but no acknowledgement of the original German author, one Albrecht Adalbert Mühlen, perhaps because he just translated from a now lost original, *Hunnibaren og Tigret, Slovo o Pu*, or whatever.

At the last minute someone had a spasm, of conscience or something, and there is a tiny stick-on label inside the front cover, with a nod of the head (*what else can you nod, now I come to think of it?*) as to a distant ancestor, towards "books written by A. A. Milne with illustrations by E. H. Shepard and published by Methuen". Then it ends, mysteriously "Copyright 1985 Walt Disney Productions" but I don't know if they are claiming Methuen, E. H. Shepard, or merely copyrighting the contents of the label, lest some wicked Taiwanese should gum it to his own books. I'd rather hoped that the re-translation might turn out to be verbally identical with the original, no matter how different in *significance*, like Pierre Menard's *Don Quijote*, but no such luck: "Winnie-the-Pooh, Winnie-the-Pooh, tubby little cubby all stuffed with fluff", it burbles to itself.

I've got a *Wind in the Willows* here too.

Translated from the Slovene?

No, this one was written in English.

You mean Kenneth Grahame's well-loved masterpiece?

I'm sorry, I didn't catch the name. This *Wind in the Willows* is a book version by Nicholas Jones of the Cosgrove Hall production directed by Chris Taylor of a story by Brian Trueman based on an original storyline by Rosemary Ann Sisson. I don't know where your Graham Kenneth chap fits in at all. These are stories about Ratty and Toad and Alfred and Auberon Mole the famous literary figure and . . . . You might fairly argue that the Cosgrove Hall figures render the characters so richly that they are entitled to the odd prequel and postquel by way of homage . . . . Yes; in the same spirit as *Huck Finn, Rhodes Scholar*; and *Baron de Charlus meets the Wolfman*.

* * *

And now Operation Machete, an annual shelf-sweep:

Changing Memories into Memoirs: A Guide to Writing your Life Story by Fanny-Maude Evans. No matter who you are, you have a story to tell. And studies have shown that nineteen words are about as many as you can absorb in one sentence. And Andrew Offut has found sixty-eight alternatives for "very". And they, like you, are an important link in a long ancestral chain.

Bulletins of the Theory of Differential Periodicity No 1 (1950) by G. F. Sleggs, Avoca, Co. Wicklow. He writes, with cadences of O'Casey, with a song of Synge, that the world is made of watered silk, that mind is a matter of moiré: "The earth with all its atoms is a cluster of phase summations subject to positional transference, the changing pattern of the variously meandering and entwining loci constituting the local events; whilst the creep of the cluster along the enormous bundle of mathematical contours is the earth's astronomical movement." And consciousness is the impossible three-dimensional pattern ("therefore we say *let the impossible happen*"): "in nerve protoplasm it is supposed that the lattices are shuttled to and fro like shaken riddles". He put some insects in a flask to see if he could measure the loss of weight while they were conscious but "the effect, if it exists, is too small to be distinguished from errors". And Queen Moiré of the Shaken Riddle, creeping through the Twilight with her enormous bundle of contours, is seen no more from this to the World's End (unless I missed Bulletin No 2).

Ian Jackson, Catalogue no 28 (POB 9075, Berkeley, California). One of a series of catalogues of underpriced rarities by minor Victorian belletrists. Mr Jackson's formidable erudition is untempered by commercial considerations: item 25, a twenty-line description of a volume offered for sale at $2.50, is a bench-mark in altruistic discursiveness: "I shall add that the last book read by the author's father-in-law, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was Sandford's brother's biography of their father (See *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, 1888, 2:299). And as J. J. Taylor wrote in 1859 to Crabb Robinson . . . ".

Pickering and Chatto Catalogue 658. Item 37 is an even benchier bench-mark, a six-page description of an item that has already been sold. The price was probably more than $2.50, but P. and C. aren't saying. What it was, or may have been, was Shakespeare's copy of North's Plutarch, how that man does get about, scattering his books everywhere, scribbling poems in the Bodleian, carving his initials on desks (see my next catalogue). Pickering and Chatto are fairly cool about it ("one need not accept Honigmann's more adventurous theories", they concede generously); what they have, or had, was a Derby family copy, certainly in the family at the time Lord Strange was involved with Lord Strange's Men, and certainly given by Countess Alice to someone called William: "*Nunc Wilhelmi* xxxx *dono Nobilissima* xxxx *Alisiae Comitissae* xxxx", deletions and excisions by the binder and various owners. A further inscription shows it was back in the family by 1611, which needs some explaining. None the less, "this copy of Plutarch could have been the very one in which he first read the stories of Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus and Julius Caesar."

This, and the bit of Tudor E. J. Thribbery, are feeble stuff: where is *Love's Labour's Wonne*, where are sonnets 155–170, the so-called trans-Uranian sonnets? Ireland thou should'st be living at this hour, Shakespeare hath need of thee.

Kuwait City Parks: A Critical Review of their Design, Facilities, Programs and Management by Subhi Abdullah Al-Mutawa. "Interpersonal conflicts can be put into three categories according the the outcome. These are the lose-lose, win-lose, and win-win situations . . . after review of the relevant literature, Filley, House and Kerr (1976) concluded that the most desirable outcome is the win-win situation . . . 62 per cent of each sample (Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis) indicated a need for more restroom facilities . . . 90 per cent indicated the need for a praying area. Rationality is considered to be the key to good decision making . . . this is not the case that exists in Kuwait parks during this study."

Hwaet! A Little Old English Anthology of American Modernist Poetry. Translated and edited by Peter Glassgold. (Sun and Moon Press, Washington, $6.95). Contains Ezra Pound's "On tille of þem Underwege"; William Carlos Williams's "Seo Reade Hweolobearwe". Hwy?

The Golden Chain: a treatment of the religious laws of menstruation and purification from a scientific point of view. By Rabbi Simon Baumberg (London 1929). "The skin acts as an insulator to the electricity generated by [illegible] nerve centres. When this generation is ab[illegible] mal the skin is unable to cope with the in[illegible] creased supply of electricity and the re[illegible] forms a toxic film which is left clinging to [illegible] skin . . . . The sages understood that this [illegible] could be removed only by water which [illegible] retains some of its radioactive properties. It is possible that an ordinary bath may re[illegible] a certain amount of the film but particles [illegible] main which in moments of sexual excit[illegible] may be reabsorbed by the body and provi[illegible] toxic environment for the child which may [illegible] born."

The Last Principle by Hwang-Tsong (Profes[illegible] sor Dr Phil Taiwan, 1958). "Now the last prin[illegible] ciple is Man:Man = H; brain-stem = B; and [illegible] other organs = AO; hence the formula for [illegible] Last Principle will be

L = H H = B X AO

The above formulation is based on the log[illegible] reasoning of physiological phenomena of [illegible] man being; it is true in applying to the prin[illegible] ples of philosophy, psychology, Buddhist [illegible] losophy, anatomy, physiology, and [illegible] physics . . . The Law of Human Intensity [illegible] there is some matter inside any matter; [illegible] gure is a symbol of human feeling . . . . [illegible] more burden one carries, the heavier one [illegible] feel. This is the sense of one's skin. If [illegible] deepen the red or deepen the blue in [illegible] tones before one's eyes, what will happen [illegible] him as you would imagine? The color(s) [illegible] he sees before his eyes is (are) all white [illegible] than redder or bluer. Why?"

"The Railway Gazette" Style Notes ([illegible] My constant prop and comfort. "Jones [illegible] often driven the engine' is more concise [illegible] 'The engine has often been driven by Jones' [illegible] And Buenos Aires the town but Buenos A[illegible] and Pacific Railway. Izmir, not Smyrna; [illegible] not Moon, Hilumma not Dagö. Chile the [illegible] Antofagasta (Chili) and Bolivia Railway [illegible] historic copy contains MS correction [illegible] the Transandine Ry Co Ltd, and the [illegible] tous typed insert slip (28th August [illegible] the ruling that the apostrophe should be [illegible] ted from Kings Cross Station. Anyone tempted to apostrophize this station should think [illegible]

* * *

To each his/her own Season's Greetings [illegible] Ge Polter is celebrating Great Mother's [illegible] burning a phallocratic tree; the offices [illegible] JIHAAAD (Joint Israeli-Hittite-Arab [illegible] Against Détente) and INSANE ([illegible] North and South Against Negotiation [illegible] Unionist-Republican Bloc) will be [illegible] nuclear-tipped Chanukah-candles [illegible] turkeys, putting tiny hand-grenades [illegible] in silver foil in the Christmas pudding [illegible] readers I wish tranquillity interrupted [illegible] the knitting of brows as you compose [illegible] literary slogans for T-shirts: entries [illegible] have been so depressing that the dea[illegible] shifted to New Year, or St Valentine's [illegible] Ides of March.

The periodicals, 31: *Panurge*

Neil Berry

Panurge, No 3
144pp. Subscriptions, £3.50.
Available from 70 Birks Road,
Cleator Moor, Cumbria CA25 5HU.

Panurge is a new-ish literary magazine from the north of England. Based in Cumbria and edited by John Murray, author of the novel *Samarkand*, it is published twice a year and has now reached its third issue. The format, squat and chunky, is very much like that of the *London Magazine*, but *Panurge* is, so far, less wide-ranging than its model, being mainly composed of short stories. Somewhat disquietingly, the magazine's prospectus announced that "all lengths, styles and attitudes" will be given serious consideration; and it must be said that hitherto *Panurge*'s standard of fiction has not been all that impressive. Stories with interiorized, discontinuous, self-indulgent narratives have been too much in evidence. The aim of publishing short stories in bulk is laudable, but the regular inclusion of some hard-headed criticism might impart to the magazine a rigour which at present it lacks. The latest [illegible] indicates a move in this direction, with [illegible] William Scammell billed on the cover for [illegible] article belabouring Martin Amis. Even [illegible] piece, however, though it effectively mocks [illegible] pretentions – as Scammell sees them – of [illegible] is's last novel *Money*, is more sprawling [illegible] need be. One feature of the magazine [illegible] can be unreservedly welcomed is an embryo [illegible] series called "Publishing against the grain [illegible] far, Michael Schmidt and Peter Owen have [illegible] their say about publishing work of minor [illegible] interest. In the issue scheduled for April [illegible] Carmen Callil will write about Virago. [illegible] shows signs of promise in seeking to [illegible] fresh talent and to challenge the metropolitan tendency to play safe, but John Murray [illegible] have been opening his door too wide. The magazine's progress will none the less be worth watching.

South West Review has brought out [illegible] Celebration", to mark the publication of [illegible] first twenty-five issues (104pp. South West Arts. £2.95. 0 9506991 4 4). Patricia Beer is [illegible] editor of the volume, which contains poems and prose by William Scammell, Ted Hughes, Peter Redgrove and others.

Letters

'Novel with Cocaine'

Sir, – Not long ago, in the Paris-based *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizheniya* (Messenger of The Russian Christian Movement), Professor N. Struve of the Sorbonne affirmed with great conviction that *Novel with Cocaine*, by "M. Ageyev" (Mark Levi), written in the early 1930s in Istanbul and published soon after in the Paris émigré review *Chisla*, was in fact the work of Vladimir Nabokov.

To support this thesis Struve adduces sentences from *Novel with Cocaine* that are "typical of Nabokov". Struve's assertions were taken up in a letter to the *TLS* (August 9) by Julian Graffy of the University of London, who referred to Struve's "detailed analysis of the secondary themes, structural devices, semantic fields and metaphors of *Novel with Cocaine*, all of which are found, on the basis of repeated quotation and comparison . . . to be quintessentially Nabokovian". There have since been echoes of Struve's theory in several publications in Europe and in the United States.

It is now time to put a stop to the absurd insinuations that Vladimir Nabokov had anything to do with writing *Novel with Cocaine*. We hereby categorically state that Vladimir Nabokov

never wrote *Novel with Cocaine*;

never used the pen name M. Ageyev;

submitted no material to *Chisla* (which had attacked him in one of its early issues);

never visited Moscow (whose ambience is an essential feature of the book);

never used cocaine or any other drugs;

wrote, unlike Ageyev, in pure, correct St Petersburg Russian.

In addition to the examples given by Natalya Rubenstein in her perceptive letter to the *TLS* (August 30), one can cite numerous other deficiencies in Ageyev's style that are obvious to anyone with a knowledge of Russian. For example, Nabokov would never have employed such monstrosities as *shibko* (a jargon term for "very" totally out of place in a literary context), *zachikhnul* (a non-existent form of "to sneeze"), or *ispol'zovyvat'* (ditto for "use"). We find it amazing that a Sorbonne specialist in Russian language and literature could have confused Ageyev's frequently vulgar and incorrect locutions with Nabokov's precise and subtle style. As D. Savitzky notes in an article refuting Struve's theory in *Russkaya Mysl'* (Russian Thought), Paris, November 8, Nabokov's Russian possesses the impeccable rhythm of classical poetry, while Ageyev's is "contrived, jolting, uneven". And a look at Ageyev's style precludes the need to rebut the rest of Struve's arguments.

Research by Frank Williams, who originally reviewed the English version of the book in the *TLS* (July 5); by the French literary journalist Alain Garric, who recently went all the way to Istanbul while preparing a lengthy article on the subject for *Libération*, and by others has since confirmed the following sequence of events. After *Novel with Cocaine* originally appeared in *Chisla* and aroused a certain curiosity in émigré circles, a Russian lady in Paris named Lydia Chervinskaya was asked to track down "Ageyev" with the help of her parents in Istanbul. She found him there, confined to a mental hospital because of tremors and convulsions. After being rescued by the lady's father, Ageyev became a friend of the family and grew close to Chervinskaya, to whom he confided his real name – Mark Levi – and his complex and rather sordid history, which included the killing of a Russian officer, flight to Turkey, and obsession with drugs. After a sojourn in Paris, Levi–Ageyev returned to Istanbul, where he died, presumably from the consequences of cocaine addiction, in 1936. Inquiries by his French translator, cited by Williams, reveal that "a Mark Abramovich Levi was buried in the Jewish cemetery of Istanbul in February 1936".

One might add that, if there had been any connection between Nabokov and *Novel with Cocaine*, someone among his surviving literary acquaintances would have had an inkling of it, and, if not, then his wife, typist, confidante and inseparable companion Véra Nabokov would surely have known.

VÉRA NABOKOV.
DIMITRI NABOKOV.
Montreux-Palace Hotel, 1820 Montreux, Switzerland.

'Byzantine Lead Seals'

Sir, – Byzantinists do not need to be reminded of their debt to the long-standing and fruitful collaboration of Alexander Veglery and George Zacos in producing a corpus of Byzantine lead seals, which sadly came to an end with the death of Mr Zacos late in 1983. G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, I, was published in Basel in 1972. Soon after his collaborator's death, Mr Veglery invited this Centre to publish their second volume. On inspection of the typescript, manuscript and photographs supplied by Mr Veglery in the summer of 1984 we decided reluctantly that we were unable to do so, on purely practical grounds. Subsequently G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, II, was published by Benteli in Berne in late 1984 and has just come to hand. It is happily a much more handsome volume than we could have managed, and in the format of the first. The text is virtually identical to that which was offered to us, with the striking exception that it omits Mr Veglery's name from the title page. I wonder whether any explanation can be offered for this omission.

A. A. M. BRYER.
Centre for Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek, University of Birmingham.

Mainwaring and Oldmixon

Sir, – In his review of *Swift vs. Mainwaring*, edited by Frank H. Ellis (November 29), Claude Rawson observes that the *Medley* was written in opposition to Swift's *Examiner* "by Arthur Mainwaring with some help from John Oldmixon and Richard Steele". This remark will bear a short gloss.

Two first-hand accounts by Oldmixon, together with external evidence, show first that Steele contributed one short paragraph to a single issue. Second, that Oldmixon set up the journal with encouragement from Mainwaring, and acted as executive editor from the start. Of forty-five issues, Mainwaring wrote some seventeen unaided; for fifteen he wrote a considerable share alongside some contribution from Oldmixon, who wrote at least twelve items by himself. Mainwaring fell ill in the early months of 1711 and played an inactive role for many weeks. At the same time, Oldmixon was composing pamphlets as part of the attack on Swift, and these were issued by Mrs Baldwin, the publisher of the *Medley*.

It has been carelessly accepted that, as the *DNB* puts it, the paper was "almost entirely Mainwaring's own work". Close scrutiny of the evidence will not support this in any degree. However important Mainwaring was in conceiving and launching the *Medley*, it is demonstrable that for much of its run the "labouring oar", as he ruefully expressed it, was in the hand of Oldmixon.

PAT ROGERS.
Department of English, University of Bristol, 3–5 Woodland Road, Bristol.

Alfred Gilbert

Sir, – With reference to the sale of versions of figures designed by Alfred Gilbert for the tomb of the Duke of Clarence, Cecil Gilbert writes (Letters, November 22) that "four *replicas* (my italics) of figures [Alfred Gilbert] was . . . casting for the tomb" were sold to "a patron, William Vivian". In fact, they were sold to a dealer, Robert Dunthorne, and the relevant entry in the studio diary, for January 17, 1899, does not describe the four figures as "replicas". One of them was indeed the first cast of "St Elizabeth of Hungary", with ivory face and inlaid with semi-precious stones, whereas a slightly later and all-bronze cast was thought good enough for the tomb. Traffic in replicas was, however, brisk: casts of "St Elizabeth of Hungary" and "St George", fully documented as by Gilbert, were sold to Dunthorne, the Fine Art Society and Agnew's, while George Gilbert's diary entry for November 14, 1899, reads: "*Sir William Agnew* called and was very affable. He desired to exchange his 'Old Man's' Head (A. G.'s) for something else of father's work. It was arranged that he should accompany A. G. to Windsor & take his choice of an equivalent value from among the figures on the tomb."

Dr Gilbert's claim that "neither [Gilbert's] contemporaries, nor the King, questioned the ethics of his action" is without foundation, nor is he right in implying that such allegations are of only recent date. The first *public* suggestion that Gilbert had been accused of defrauding King Edward VII came not from Bevis Hillier in 1968 but from Lady Helena Gleichen in 1940 (see below), followed by Gilbert's nephew, Adrian Bury, in 1954. However, there is ample evidence, in the form of documents published for the first time in my biography of Gilbert, that he was censured by his contemporaries, including King Edward VII and King George V, and that he himself was well aware of the allegations. I repeat three of these statements here, but would refer Dr Gilbert to pages 201, 309 and 310 of my book for others, and would urge him to pay particular attention to the dates when they were made:

> A misfortune that had contributed more than any other to Gilbert's disgrace was the fact that replicas of some of the figures for the Clarence Tomb had got into circulation. This was, indeed, a very serious and blameworthy fact . . . (Adrian Bury, *Shadow of Eros*, London, 1954, p 95).

> [King George V] was absolutely set in his belief that Gilbert had behaved disgracefully about the Duke of Clarence's tomb at Windsor, and that as King Edward had said he would never have anything to do with Gilbert again he was not going against his decision. Gilbert was accused not only of not completing the Clarence Tomb, but of having sold the figures separately to a dealer, having already received money for them from the King (Lady Helena Gleichen, typescript dated November 4, 1934 [Royal Academy of Arts, Spielmann papers SP 10/38/2]. Published in a shortened form in her autobiography *Contacts and Contrasts*, London, 1940, p 318).

> I shall at least be secured against a repetition of scurrilous and anonymous attacks accusing me of disposing of finished works destined for the tomb (Alfred Gilbert to Revd J. W. R. Brocklebank, April 25, 1913 [Ashmolean Museum]).

As far as I am aware, no one has ever questioned Gilbert's *legal* right to behave as he did. It was the ethical and not the legal aspect of his actions that the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Frank Dicksee, had in mind when he told M. H. Spielmann (October 5, 1926, SP 10/25/1) that "the one thing that stood between R. A.'s and the welcome which they would like to offer [Gilbert] was the statement made, and always believed on evidence they thought convincing, that there had been impropriety of a grave nature in the statuettes or copies of the statuettes, said to have been destroyed by the sculptor in defiance of the King, being afterwards offered for sale in Bond Street". It is a matter of fact, not opinion, that these particular allegations were remembered in 1926 when the question of Gilbert's readmittance to the Royal Academy was raised.

RICHARD DORMENT.
31 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11.

'Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester'

Sir, – Your critic's view of what was called for in *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester* (November 1) is very different from the intentions that led to its planning and preparation. Mark Girouard is depreciatory because, as he says, he would have like to have seen a comprehensive study of Manchester buildings or, even better, of its culture generally. The book reviewed has a totally different purpose. It is subtitled "Ten illustrations of patronage and practice" and it presents individual studies on Manchester's highest achievements in the visual arts. Each chapter was to be authoritative, well documented and adequately illustrated. Each is based on original research, and in some cases this was undertaken specially for this project. The book assumed this form because such studies were judged to be valuable in themselves and essential if more general works are to be soundly based. It points to the need for further detailed studies of specific subjects.

Dr Girouard offers two criticisms of the general contents. One arises from the reprinting of an essay that was first published in 1950, and the other from the exclusion of a chapter on Manchester's commercial warehouses. The essay, Professor Whiffen's on Charles Barry's local works, was considered to be too valuable to be omitted. As yet it has not been superseded, it is not widely available in its original form, and as a milestone in scholarship devoted to the visual arts in Manchester it is the book's true precedent. The significance of the warehouse, Manchester's staple building type, is undeniable. It is acknowledged in the book more fully than by passing references, as is claimed in the review, but as a subject for a chapter it was rejected because it was unresearched and too large and amorphous to be covered satisfactorily. Alison Cooper's study commenced after the book had been planned and the authors commissioned. I know her work intimately because it was initiated on my suggestion and has proceeded under my supervision. I have no doubt that in time her research will be published.

A lesser point is that Girouard claims to detect an apologetic attitude in my introduction. I am as unaware of this as I am of any cause for apology, but a principal point made is that there is substantial evidence that Victorian Manchester was not as black and unremittingly grim as the stereotypes suggest. However, neither romantic ardour nor filial pride can persuade me that the city is or was beautiful – except on rare evanescent occasions. I do not call that being apologetic.

Crucial questions facing those studying the phenomenon of the great Victorian industrial cities lie in the choice of scale and subject. Manchester is a classic case. Many generalizations have been made, and there is even a well-rehearsed set of quotations and sources on the city's life. While not denying these, it is surely time to conduct further detailed studies on various historical aspects that have been overlooked, the arts in particular. What is new in this book has been revealed both directly and incidentally by such work. The assumptions and stereotypes need to be checked. Some are popular and deeply entrenched. Girouard, for instance, observes that in art or architecture Manchester had "difficulty in developing . . . an aesthetic equivalent to the Manchester school of economics", and it is considered a fault that this is not discussed in this book. It is not considered because it is not relevant. There was no school of economics in any true sense. Cobden, Bright and the Anti-Corn Law League exerted a powerful political influence, but there was no developing school of economic theory and the term "Manchester School" was a derisory catch phrase coined to describe them by Disraeli in 1846.

JOHN H. G. ARCHER.
School of Architecture, University of Manchester.

'Doublespell'

Sir, – The time-warp Anthony Horowitz cites in his criticism of *Doublespell* by Janet Lunn (November 8) belongs to the review, not the book.

He suggests that she should have "plumped for a more realistic depiction of the 1980s". She could have done that. But as the book was first published in 1968, it would have been difficult. That fact rather disrupts the rest of Horowitz's review – *Doublespell* was published thirteen years before *The Root Cellar*, so it's not a "second novel". And the criticism that *Doublespell* belongs to the "irrelevant and anachronistic" stories "of old houses full of rooms begging to be explored after tea" doesn't hold either. Unless Horowitz wants to write off the Narnia chronicles.

Still, I think it quite wonderful that reviews of children's books by Canadian authors appear in the *TLS* at all – maybe the dislocation is spatial, not temporal.

LISSA PAUL.
Stong College, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Mirror Images

Sir, – In his review (November 22) of Frank Kermode's *Forms of Attention*, John Bayley is wrong about Henry James's dream being set in the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles. As Chapter Twenty-five of *A Small Boy and Others* explains, it actually occurred in the Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre.

BERNARD RICHARDS.
Brasenose College, Oxford.

COMMENTARY

Histories of torment

Alan Jenkins

1919
Curzon Cinema

"Nothing escaped him. Nothing . . . . He says somewhere . . . what was it? 'There are no cures. Only the possibility of converting hysterical misery into everyday unhappiness.' Something like that. What else is possible? He was . . . a great man." This contribution to an American chat-show about Freud compels a middle-aged woman, Sophie Rubin, also a contributor to the show but first seen watching it in her apartment in New York, to return to Vienna, the scene of her analysis with the great man many years before, and to seek out her fellow analysand, the exiled white Russian, Alexander Scherbatov.

1919 was a bad year for Vienna, and a time of hardship for Freud. In the course of it he psychoanalysed the "wealthy young Russian", the "wolf-man", who had been the subject of his most subtle and exhaustive published case-history, "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918) – and who was back in Vienna after his first long analysis of 1910-14, and after the war had "robbed him of his home, his possessions and all his family relationships". Freud also began an analysis that year of a "beautiful, clever girl" who had attempted suicide as the result of her obsessive love for a "society" lady of dubious reputation (this obsession due, Freud thought, to the girl's disappointed longing for her father's love in puberty), and who was written up in "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in Women" (1920).

It is, in a sense, the footnotes to the cases, their coincidence and the suggestiveness of their circumstances that form the substratum of the film, rather than the descriptive arguments and theoretical conclusions of the published papers. *1919* is from first to last a fiction, a fiction that depends for its resonance at certain moments on the historical reality of Freud and his work, and on other historical realities of the years after 1914; it is the lives lived between or beyond the "case history" which the fiction evokes.

Alexander's exile from his childhood world of vast estates, nurses, serfs and chauffeurs, his seduction by his sister and hopless sexual dependence on peasant women, his job as a waiter in Vienna, his marriage to a girl, a Jewess, whom he loved but did not desire, and her suicide after the arrival of the Nazis; Sophie's own "exile" in New York, the deaths of her family in concentration camps, her own marriage ("I thought; Now I will know") and its failure, emerge between flashbacks to the sessions with Freud and through accounts which the two wrench out of themselves during the afternoon they spend together in modern, "timeless" Vienna. The acting of Paul Scofield and Maria Schell in the lead roles is flawless and often inspired.

The film unfolds almost entirely through the images conjured by memory and speech. There is, inevitably, a simplifying or reduction of theoretical – and therapeutic – complexity in the "session" scenes (in which Freud is not glimpsed; we only hear his voice, "weary, avuncular"). There is an over-compensating density of texture in the recreation of interiors – Alexander's furniture-and-photograph-crammed rooms uncannily reproducing the atmosphere of Freud's, with their stoves, rugs, couch and curios. Sophie's life-long socialism is asserted but barely explored; this defiance of her father parallels a little too neatly her defiance of Freud's reading of her obsession ("I *love* her. . . . Why do you keep dragging me down?"). The way that obsession is presented relies a little too heavily on the iconography of crumbling resort-hotels, opulently silky bedrooms, the warm glow of flesh-tints in candlelight, unbound tresses and a shyly peeping nipple, but this is just excusable as consistent with what Freud tells us about the girl's phantasies and with the bisexual *demi-mondaine's* life of *luxe, calme et volupté*. More troublingly, an ambiguity about the status of the offered recollections and scenes – whether "real" or phantasy occurrences – might be partly to blame for the lack of fullness in "young" Alexander and "young" Sophie. This lack of conviction cannot be put down to the performances of Colin Firth and Clare Higgins, who are both remarkable.

The fragmented style of direction is partly responsible; the private dramas of neurotic disturbance, which to some extent we have to take on trust, and the inescapable logic of private pain, resistance and transference, the life of memory and desire, which are always clearly in focus, are constantly juxtaposed with the great world of shattering events. "History" is too often reduced to a few seconds of jerky archive film or a grainy still, though these are unfamiliar and often very beautiful. One of the film's greatest pleasures is its subtext, a delicate, Barthesian attentiveness to the power of photography, of the "what-has-been".

The Freudian dimension seems at times the most easily won, falling occasionally into cliché or facile irony; and the film's greatest intensities are reserved for dramatic high-points in the developing intimacy of Sophie and Alexander: when Sophie breaks down and weeps on recalling her night of sexual bliss with Anna; when Alexander, still imprisoned in his rage, thrusts back a curtain on the bed he shared with his "untouchable" wife, or wails in agony as he points out the exact patch of kitchen-floor where he discovered her corpse. It is in the "wolf-man" case-history that Freud writes of the "timelessness" of unconscious forces – the timelessness of their operation in the individual, as opposed to their archetypal, Jungian residue – and this is the force of the older Sophie and Alexander's uniquely significant brief encounter. What ensues from it is, in a way, the only possible completion – itself resolving nothing, redeeming nothing – of the process that began for both of them with Freud, forty-odd years earlier. It has taken this long for them to be able to say those things they hid even from Freud, and it isn't over yet.

Were they helped by analysis? Perhaps not. Could their lives have been less constrained, less tormented – had Alexander not been thrust so brutally out of his familiar world, had he, perhaps, gone to America; had Sophie stayed behind? Almost certainly, and yet . . . , Alexander says, "I was not cured". To which Sophie replies "Cured of what?, A Revolution? Your life?" These are the questions the film fleshes out with considerable sensitivity to both spoken word and image, with great patience and care, at its own slow pace.

Pooh in period

Kate Flint

E. H. Shepard
Sally Hunter and Patrick Searle Fine Art, 2 Motcomb Street, London SW1X 8JU, until December 30

E. H. Shepard's name is inseparable from those of Pooh, Piglet and Eeyore; Badger, Rat and Toad. His unfussy penwork rendered Milne's creations memorably visible. *The Wind in the Willows* has had other illustrators, before and since, including Arthur Rackham, but Shepard's pictures have been the most influential in establishing the image of the damply green Toad, the clubbish camaraderie of Mole and Rat.

This comprehensive exhibition of Shepard's work includes, as one would expect, examples of these famous illustrations. Piglet's ears stream in the wind; Toad squats dustily by the Canary Coloured cart. Additionally, it proves him to have been a versatile artist, not just animating stuffed toys and rocking horses, but documenting comfortable adult middle-class life in the 1920s and 1930s. The portraits and figure studies are slick, sentimental and unremarkable, but Shepard's work comes alive when he uses his energetic lines to show motoring, tennis parties or fantastical games of golf in which office workers take a lunchtime practice putt into the open coal-hole of a quiet residential square ("Coaling out at the twelfth": Shepard's puns were always atrocious). Children remained a favourite topic, his own serving frequently as models, as they had done, for example, for the *When We Were Very Young* illustrations. The coyness of the *bons mots* is cloying: a paddling girl, pointing to a courting couple in the shadows of a cliff, announces that she has found a "snugglers' cave". Shepard's humour is affectionate, not biting. No friendly bombs could ever be called down by him on his snug suburbias.

E. H. Shepard worked as a *Punch* staff artist for over fifty years, as a political as well as a social commentator. His stance was unflaggingly conservative, while firmly anti-fascist. Wherever possible, his anthropomorphizing asserts itself. "A Dress for the Party" (1938) shows a lean and hungry wolf, with People's Front bib and Communist Party cummerbund, standing contemplatively outside the Attlee Political Costumier, with its fleecy sheepskin on hire inside. On a pre-Orwellian Animal Farm, Sir Oswald Mosley's remarks that "Conservatism has chosen the financier. Fascism chooses the British Farmer" are greeted by the audience raising hoof, claw and trotter in raised salute. But in wartime, the tone of Shepard's cartoons becomes slightly uneasy. Though, in 1915, he could send up the jingoism of leeks and marrows that represented the war effort of domestic gardeners, or in 1940 depict an Olde Worlde Mappe commemorating the agriculturizing of Hyde Park, he was not at home with weighty and unsettling subjects.

"Animal Grab", a cartoon for Punch *commenting on the number of Private Members' Bills devoted to animals in 1949, from the exhibition reviewed here.*

The drawings manifest an uncritically cheerful ease with the world. The gloomiest work of the whole exhibition is a pencil sketch, c.1930, "Eeyore in Spain". The donkey stands, now dejected than ever, burdened down with the pack saddle. Pooh, his master, stands by in his black hat and Andalusian cloak. Perhaps Shepard was extorting a mild moment of revenge: a great was the demand for him to recolour old drawings, produce new dust-jackets, even invent new poses for his best-known subject. But privately, he was heard to remark that we were getting rather tired of that "silly bear". The value of this show perhaps is that it helps to put Pooh and his friends in a period context, rather than, as is more usual, regard them with timeless affection.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 257

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 17. A prize of £50 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 257" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on January 24.

1 When we run over our libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it concern any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

2 C led his friend to a seat "the very picture of desparation." He then learnt in broken sequences, that his manuscript, "left out in too careless a manner after it had been read", was, except four or five bits of leaves, "irrevocably annihilated." That was all, nothing worse.

3 Crated masterpieces on the wharf,
and never opened, somehow started first.
And then, as though by imitation, the library
took. One book seemed to inspire another, to
remind it of the flame enclosed
within its papyrus like a drowsy torch
The fire, roused perhaps by what it read,
its reedy song, raged Dionysian, a band
Of Corybantes, down the halls now headlong.

4 "Down the incinerator with it!" His tall, lean, sinewy figure paused a moment by the bookcase, then began to skirt the furniture: N's voice was heard ordering someone to stop him, and the naval officer moved to block his way to the door. The actor leaped for the manuscript, and there was a sound of tearing paper as H wrenched it away. Holding it tight to his chest, with his free hand he pushed off his pursuers, like somebody racing for touchdown. At the door there was a scuffle, but H managed to open it, and it slammed behind him. He did not return.

5 Father Matthew could be satisfied that O shortly before dying had renounced literature; but the brief blaze might be deemed a proof and symbol of this renunciation happened to be strictly the opposite thing; as he crouched and sobbed in front of the stove ("Where?" queries my publisher. In Moscow.), an artist was destroying the labour of long years because he finally realized that the completed book was untrue to his genius; so Chichikov, instead of piously petering out in a wooden chapel among ascetic fir trees on the shore of a legendary lake, was restored to his native element; the little blue flames of hell.

6 She knew that *In Ballast to the White Sea* was only six feet inside the door of the shack, but members of the small crowd that had gathered would not let her go in. L, beside himself over what he was losing, raced inside, to be struck immediately on the shoulder by a burning beam that fell from the rafters. He staggered out, leaving *In Ballast* to the flames.

7 I do concur *now* in the expediency and propriety of the destruction, but had the question been *then* submitted to me, they certainly would not have been consumed by *my* decision. It is therefore perhaps as well that it was not.

8 In the course of the summer he returned to L, . . . and there he at last finished his tragedy, which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated. A few days before his death, while burning a great mass of papers, he picked out from among them the original unformed sketch of this tragedy, in his own hand-writing, and gave it to Mr L, by whose favour a copy of it is now in my possession.

9 *May 11.* Dull; afternoon fine. Slaughter of the innocents.

Competition No 253

Winner: John Cosgrove

Answers:

All three are translations of the opening lines of Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

1 All breathed in silence, and intensely gazed
When from the lofty couch his voice Aeneas raised
And thus began: "The task which you impose
O Queen, revives unutterable woes;
How by the Grecians Troy was overturned,
And her power fell – to be for ever mourned
Calamities which with a pitying heart
I saw, of which I formed no common part."
William Wordsworth

2 All were attentive to the God-like Man
When from his lofty Couch he thus began:
Great Queen, what you command me to relate
Renews the sad remembrance of our Fate.
An Empire from its old Foundations rent,
And every woe the *Trojans* underwent
And peop'd cities made a Desart Place:
All that I saw, and part of which I was
Not ev'n the hardest of our Foes could hear
Nor stern *Ulysses* tell without a tear.
John Dryden

3 They whisted all, with fixed face attent,
When prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak. O Queen! it is thy will
I should renew a woe cannot be told:
How the Greeks did spoil and overthrow
The Phrygian wealth and wailful realm of Troy
These ruthful things that I myself beheld,
And whereof no small part fell to my share.
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey

COMMENTARY

The dark side of reason

John Kerrigan

W.A. MOZART
Don Giovanni
Coliseum

Jonathan Miller has set his production of *Don Giovanni* on the dark side of Enlightenment. Three Piranesian towers dominate the set. When revolved, by wigged and braided footmen, they disclose interiors as gloomy and troubled as their frontage. High windows, almost completely blocked with crumbling ashlar, stare blankly across a stage lit by candles or the chill blue flicker of ersatz moonlight. This is a darkness in which reason sleeps, erotic monsters are brought forth, and Goya is too much quoted. Rouge-cheeked like dolls, in lace mantillas, the women madly toss a manikin in a blanket, while their husbands and lovers, elegantly clad by Philip Prowse in black drapes, bicorn hats and frock-coats, seem so many mourners at the funeral of the *ancien régime*.

At the centre of this shadowy scene stands a very young Giovanni. Most Great Dons of the World have been in their prime, or older, but, as John Stone points out in a useful ENO programme, the role was first sung by a man of twenty-one. William Shimell's youthfulness works well, especially when he's pitched against the vocally frail but affecting old Commendatore of John Connell, and one can imagine Mozart approving the dapper panache with which he tackles the Champagne Aria. Shimell completely lacks, however, the restless, sensual drive of a full-scale Giovanni. Appropriately, he is not dragged off to burning hell by vengeful devils, but is wafted into clouds of dry ice by the wraiths of the women he has betrayed. Such an outcome is consistent with his lukewarm performance; yet the music points another way.

Leporello and Ottavio meanwhile are determinedly dull. Richard Van Allan sings the Catalogue Aria – pure Gilbert and Sullivan in Anthony and Amanda Holden's uneven translation – as though it were a laundry list, and Maldwyn Davies is a mellifluous stuffed shirt throughout. True, the latter's caution helps crack the problem of the Act One ending (cornered, Giovanni hands Ottavio his sword, knowing he will not strike), but an essential tension is removed from the opera if its representative of conventional morality is reduced. That Miller sought this reduction seems clear from his denying "Dalla sua pace" to Davies, while the flattening of Leporello into "a failure . . . the child left outside the pub" is confessedly directorial. An intelligent search for coherence has foundered here, in a consistency which deadens.

Like his hero, Miller fares better with the ladies. Felicity Lott's Elvira is particularly memorable. Dignified, alert and engaging herself as Giovanni's equal in the wooing of Zerlina, she offers a subtle interpretation of a role too often drenched in hysteria. Allowed the Vienna additions, she vindicates "Mi tradì", and phrases it so nobly that the orchestra, under Mark Elder, sounds lumpish by comparison. As Donna Anna, Josephine Barstow is also impressive, though her large voice billows in coloratura passages, and, at high volume, thrills into fragments. She is most succesful when smoothly melodic, sounding routine in the recitatives (supported by fortepiano and cello), and distinctly uncomfortable when forced to register quick changes of emotion. Just what is missing is shown by Lesley Garrett. This Zerlina coruscates with feeling. Her scenes with Mark Richardson's unyokelish Masetto are delightful, and, though it's an odd *Don Giovanni* in which a girl must make the running, she provokes William Shimell irresistibly.

Miller has produced an evening full of insights, hard-earned out of character analysis; but his attempt to humanize the opera quashes its moody complexity. Such fraught areas as Anna's relations with Ottavio may be truer if left entangled, and, while it's doubtless desirable to project a coherent style, subduing the action in varied shades of grey (so that even the peasant revelry is crepuscular) drains the work of life.

Superior tushery

E. S. Turner

BARONESS ORCZY
The Scarlet Pimpernel
Her Majesty's Theatre

Now eighty years old, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* transformed the cult of the silly ass by revealing that cackling inanity was really a cover for true British grit. In the First World War (while the languid "knuts" of real life died bravely in Flanders) a popular play, *The Man Who Stayed At Home*, featured a silly ass who attracted white feathers but was in fact busy catching German spies. In *The Ghost Train*, a hit of the 1920s, another episthognathous coxcomb proved to be a Special Branch man pursuing criminals. And we all know what the falsetto heroes got up to in the works of Sayers, Allingham and others.

When Baroness Orczy's tale of two cities opened in London in 1905 a clever critic said: "The scarlet pimpernel is a little red flower that opens in the morning and shuts at night. So should the play." But the only thing wrong with it, as an indignant galleryite pointed out, was that in the last act an Englishman was thrashed by a "froggy". The scene was hastily rewritten, after which Fred Terry and Julia Neilson were able to live off the play for nearly thirty years. The thrashing scene survived in the novel, which came out after the play was produced.

In this high-spirited revival at Her Majesty's, with a new adaptation by Beverley Cross, the precious Sir Percy Blakeney, rescuer of French aristocrats from the guillotine, again escapes the lash, for which we must all be grateful. Since everyone in the audience knows Sir Percy's secret, the way in which the nonsense is put over matters a great deal. Under the direction of Nicholas Hytner, the company play with enormous brio, very much in the spirit of pantomime, with the aid of one of those protean sets (designed by Mark Thompson) which change with often hilarious ingenuity, not to say imprudence. If the baleful black-clad French envoy Chauvelin were to appear through a star-trap like a demon king probably no one would object.

Scene One, with the guillotine being trundled up through billowing smoke to do its business, is like a collaboration between Goya and Charles Addams. In a later scene beside the guillotine, English gentlemen disguised as nuns resort to Twickenham tactics and severed heads from the executioner's basket are used as missiles, fairly convulsing an audience full of the Christmas spirit. What happened to those minuets which once graced the play and which Fred Terry and Julia Neilson eventually became too fat to dance? At least we get a glimpse of Lord Grenville's mansion, scene of the ball, very elegant with tall plated palms in the Brighton Pavilion manner and servants looking like hotel doormen in Singapore.

Donald Sinden by now has quite a few fops under his belt. Behind the vacuous, wide-mouthed gape, the giggles, the *moues* and the macaronic graces are suitable, and characteristic, reserves of resonance. Sir Percy's wit is supposed to go off at half-cock, but, when invited to share rat soup with Chauvelin in a French inn, he is allowed to say "I don't care for *ratatouille*." As Lady Blakeney, Joanna McCallum is riven, though never quite desolated, by opposed loyalties, the very picture of distress tempered by finery. Charles Kay's masterly Chauvelin exudes and exults in revolutionary malevolence (the same actor played a more enigmatic agent in BBC Television's *Edge of Darkness*).

In short, this lavishly mounted extravaganza is a lesson in the transfiguration of tushery into really superior tushery. It may even solve the problem of where to take French guests at Christmas.

The voyeur viewed

Clive Sinclair

PETER SHAFFER
Yonadab
Olivier Theatre

"Yes, I admit that the whole affair does have the look of a charade or costume-drama", says Yonadab at the start. Nor has he changed his mind by the end, when he imagines himself in a theatre. It is a conceit that links the historical personages, always aware of an "audience looking to them for instruction and entertainment", with the ghosts invoked by Yonadab to beguile his readers (I am quoting from the source-book, Dan Jacobson's *The Rape of Tamar*). As is now common knowledge, Yonadab's fancy has come true; Peter Shaffer has taken his metaphor literally and put him on the stage. What he has failed to do, however, is to translate the thought into the third dimension.

There is, to be fair, an attempt to capture the story for the theatre, but the effort is not sustained. Throughout the performance the stage is surrounded by curtains through which we are allowed to peep, courtesy of Yonadab and the lighting man. Written in Hebrew script on these drapes are the original chapters from the Book of Samuel. Yonadab's first words are in this same Hebrew, as though the letters were coming to life. Much later, when Amnon ravishes his sister, Tamar, Yonadab revives this image and we see, at his behest, their various couplings projected on the curtains like letters from an indecipherable alphabet. There is no transcendent truth in these characters – as Amnon confirms when he declares the night's work to be "just another fuck". But there is no theatrical magic either.

The problem lies in Shaffer's decision to retain Yonadab as storyteller – though who could blame him? Yonadab fits comfortably into a theatrical tradition older than Shakespeare, giving Alan Bates a role to relish as Lord of Misrule. This would have sufficed if Shaffer were not afflicted with hubris. Yonadab's sceptical mask never slips in the book – of course it doesn't, the story has been rehearsed too many times – just as David retains his credulity, "the secret of his success". In the play, however, Shaffer has made a crucial change; Yonadab will become credulous. This in turn means that the relationship between the narrator and his characters must also change for, at some point, Yonadab will have to lose control of the plot. In other words, the other characters have the same status as Yonadab; all are equally real.

The audience is thus invited to suspend its disbelief (not an easy matter, given Yonadab's anachronisms) and accept that it is at the court of King David. The trouble is, both writer and director seem to lack the necessary conviction. David comes over as a cross between Atahualpa and King Lear, beautiful Absalom looks as if he belongs at a Band Aid jamboree and Amnon behaves like Captain Hook.

In the novel, moreover, there is a pact between the narrator – Yonadab – and his readers. It is his story, to be sure, but it could not exist without a readership. Jacobson demands that we take the act of reading literally. Shaffer seems satisfied with passive witnesses. The only involvement his Yonadab offers the audience is voyeurism. Thus the retribution, when it comes, affects Yonadab alone – not his partners in crime. All this is not to say that the play withholds all artistic and intellectual pleasures, but merely to complain that they occur *post facto* (as I am writing this review in fact). As always with Shaffer it is the idea, not the play, that is the thing.

Yonadab persuades his lovesick cousin to rape Tamar by quoting the customs of neighbouring Egypt, where royal siblings mate and become divine in the process. The result is disappointment, needless to say, which turns infatuation into hate. Amnon throws out Tamar who wanders the streets of Jerusalem stark naked (Wendy Morgan deserves the *bravos* she receives at the end), advertising her shame, and finding her way, as if by accident, to the house of Absalom. This is not part of Yonadab's scheme and he begins to suspect that a greater author than himself is taking over the plot. Shaffer finally wrests the story away from Jacobson and makes it his own.

Threatened by Absalom, Yonadab drops similar poison in his ear. He invents certain prophesies that lead the credulous to the conclusion that both Absalom and Tamar are ordained. Absalom makes that jump and Yonadab – to his surprise – follows him. For Tamar seems to offer independent confirmation of the dreams he has described. What he doesn't know – how can the storyteller be so ignorant? – is that Tamar has become as adept behind the arras as himself, listening as he tempts Absalom. Like Aaron he believes that our greatest desire is to see gods walking upon the earth, and like that tainted priest he denies the second commandment. He wants to lose himself, to be dazzled and dissolved in visible splendour. Instead he is bathed in the blood of his relatives as Tamar – her consciousness raised and her conscience erased by her defilement – completes her terrible revenge. Yonadab, faced with Amnon, the naked idealist, dead and covered with the dung of a donkey, and Absalom hanging by his hair between heaven and earth, not surprisingly remembers his humanity and renounces all creeds. If only Shaffer had suspended my disbelief as well as the stage-hands suspended Absalom, I would have cheered Yonadab's passionate denunciation to the heavens.

Old-fashioned camp

Rupert Christiansen

The Magic Flute
ICA

The title-page of the programme for the ICA's Christmas pantomime doesn't mention Mozart. Instead it's "Schikenader's [sic] libretto staged by Neil Bartlett and Leah Housman with a company of eighteen singers, comedians and musicians". It would have been better if this were so, and the composer had been left out of things altogether, but what we are in fact given is a trimmed staging of the opera, with some of Mozart's most technically challenging music slung at a cast embarrassingly incapable of doing any sort of justice to it.

Bartlett and Housman were presumably intending to turn out a chic little extravaganza, in the style of Lindsay Kemp; there's certainly no evidence of any serious effort to reinterpret or straighten out the complexities and inconsistencies of the piece. Old-fashioned camp dominates throughout, with a Principal-Boy Tamino in lurex, Sarastro and his henchmen in dinner jackets and a drag Papagena pouting, flouncing, and crooning in falsetto. The level of inventiveness is low, and largely trades in the familiar clichés of what Sally Bowles called "divine decadence". The publicity promised spectacle, but the only *coup de théâtre* was a breathtakingly blatant plagiarism of a trick in Philip Prowse's *Phedra*. The moral philosophy which pervades Sarastro's establishment is milked for laughs (which were scarcely forthcoming) and there is no sense of the necessary pantomime contract between Good and Evil.

Nicolas Bloomfield did a decent job of reducing the score for a band of seven, but trying to keep so much of the music was asking for trouble. Most of the singing is so execrable that it scarcely bears thinking about. Honourable exceptions should be made for Gaynor Miles, who has a brave stab at the Queen of the Night's coloratura, and for Jennifer Rhys-Davies's Pamina, stuffed to resemble a sofa, but poised and respectably in tune. Despair is staved off by one genuinely charming performance – Simon Dormandy's Papageno. Projecting his songs in an attractive musical-comedy baritone and gangling across the stage like a demented giraffe, Dormandy is fresh and funny, with a line in moral cowardice and manic gloom worthy of Tony Hancock. His talents deserve something better to bounce off.

Far from oofless

Arthur Marshall

GERALD FROW
"Oh, Yes It Is!": A history of pantomime
192pp. BBC. £12.95.
0563203668

In one of those delightful Ambassadors Theatre revues of the 1940s there was a sketch in which an English duchess (suitably enough an actor in drag) tried to explain an English pantomime to an American sergeant, somewhat puzzled as to why Dick Whittington, *en route* for Highgate Hill, should be a longlegged girl who sang rather a lot, while her mother was a robust comedian dispensing vulgar jokes ("I have no money but my aunt has piles"). The duchess was wasting her time, for incomprehension was total.

Gerald Frow's admirably researched and illustrated book, *"Oh, Yes It Is!": A history of pantomime*, would have helped the sergeant considerably, for back we go to pantomime's roots in the Italian *commedia dell 'arte* and the mimed, knockabout fun to which a tremendous boost was later given by the famous clown Joey Grimaldi. Billed as "The Michelangelo of Buffoonery", Grimaldi made George IV laugh so violently that he burst his stays. The fun was of a simple kind and involved strings of pink sausages, butter slides, people falling over and officials being discomfited by red-hot pokers, all in a continual riot of thumps and bangs and slaps.

It was by no means everybody's cup of tea. Pope and Fielding both disliked and attacked pantomime, and Garrick too was unfriendly, but the successful manager John Rich, to whom we also owe *The Beggar's Opera*, pressed triumphantly on with it at Covent Garden, where Sheridan surprisingly provided the script of *Harlequin Friday* (yes, indeed, Robinson Crusoe's footprinted friend). In the end, Garrick had to swallow his distaste and bring pantomime to Drury Lane (pantomime down the years has frequently saved the financial bacon of that famous house). And to give some idea of the fortunes to be made, in the early 1800s *Mother Goose* ran for ninety-two nights and made a profit of £20,000. Those who are perhaps thinking that nowadays pantomime is dead may care to know that last year there were thirty-two pantomimes in the London area, seventy in the provinces and twenty-two in Scotland.

Gradually the familiar stories emerged – Aladdin and his elaborated impecunious nobleman father, known as Baron Hardup or Stoneybroke (though in the 1900s he appeared, for a reason now lost to us, as "Boosey de Blackfriars", possibly some contemporary allusion). Pantomime fathers always tend to be penniless, Little Bo-Peep's being called Squire Oofless.

Principal boys, professionally known as "breeches parts", were early on the scene, parading their shapely legs and making those supposedly male gestures, the clenched fist of the right hand being thumped into the open palm of the left or the thumbs tucked nonchalantly into the belt, with the legs wide apart. The slapping of the thigh was also much in fashion, and remains so. And although the story line was important and always kept to, it was possible to break away from time to time and provide a tasteful interpolation:

Well, things so far are going very pleasantly!
I think I'll dance a little hornpipe presently.

And the jokes! "I will now get my foot in the crystal slipper" boasts one of the Ugly Sisters, to be met with the side-splitting "You couldn't get your foot in the Crystal Palace." Puns were extremely popular: "You've got red hair!" "Well, that's hair-reditary". And the worse the joke, the more "they" roared: "What was Gandhi's first name?" "Goosey Goosey".

Mr Frow has discovered many fascinating facts. Playing Jack at Drury Lane in the 18[illegible] century, Eliza Povey announced that she had no hand for heights and flatly refused to climb the beanstalk, demanding a stand-in. Marie Lloyd, depicting Little Red Riding Hood, decided to pep up the story a bit and, kneeling by the bedside to say her prayers, flashed her anxiously under the bed for a *pot-de chambre*. The names of the Ugly Sisters have been varied: Namby and Pamby, Euthanasia and Asphyxia, Valderma and Germolene. And I regret to say that in an 1830 version of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the Prince forgets himself and Beauty only wakes up nine months later with [illegible] giving birth to twins.

Famous names, affectionately remembered, dot the pages – Vesta Tilley, George Graves, Dan Leno, Nellie Wallace and, the best of them all perhaps, Dorothy Ward (for the fall of the curtain she used pluckily to plug herself into the floor and light up her bulbs).

An astonishing thing. Guess who in the 1850s played Principal Wolf in the Christmas *Little Bo-Peep* at Edinburgh? Henry Irving, nineteen years old and alleged to have "curdled the blood of the ecstatic children" as Scruncher.

Connoisseurs of the manic

Hilary Spurling

ALEC GUINNESS
Blessings in Disguise
238pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.
0241 116813
PAULINE SCUDAMORE
Spike Milligan: A biography
318pp. Granada. £8.95.
0246 122757

These two books remind me of Henry Irving's remark, after a day at the seaside, when Ellen Terry's children pointed out that his bag of shrimps was leaking: "Poor things," said Irving tenderly, "they're nervous." Alec Guinness learnt early to conceal the faintest hint of nerves beneath a smooth, hard-boiled exterior that somehow carried him through being sacked by Tyrone Guthrie, publicly squashed by Gielgud ("What's happened to you? I thought you were rather good. You're terrible"), and warned off, as a young actor playing Richard II, by Ralph Richardson as John of Gaunt: "Never come within six feet of me on stage, old cock." Very soon, Guinness was giving as good as he got off-stage as well as on. This book is full of frightening stories like the time when Ernest Milton, holidaying on Ischia, split sun-tan oil on his suit and was forbidden by Guinness to take it to the cleaners on the mainland: "'Ruin! Ruin!' he howled. Timon of Athens had nothing on him for rage at his own folly, contempt for an island that had no dry-cleaning facilities, and the desire to exile himself far from the sight of men."

There are equally alarming descriptions of standing up to Edith Sitwell, holding out against Martita Hunt, and staying with the Guthries when Guinness twice insisted, in defiance of his host's formidable will, on spring-cleaning the squalid debris of old newspapers, rotting potato peels and decayed, discarded food which made that great man feel at home. A connoisseur of the manic and chaotic, Guinness ruthlessly controlled both tendencies in himself. "Everything in it looked as if it had been chewed for half a century", he writes appreciatively of Ernest Milton's make-up box. "My own theatrical dressing-table betrays my amateur streak, everything laid out spick and span as if for a sale of cosmetic goods."

He says relatively little about his impoverished upbringing, as a lonely, insecure, illegitimate only child, at the hands of an inadequate mother and a violent, bullying stepfather. His first move towards the theatre was a fan-letter to Sybil Thorndike ("Dear Miss Thorndike, I saw you in a play this afternoon and I quite liked you . . ."), who responded generously, as did a great many others, to this cool and uncommonly persistent customer with the lop-sided smile who walked all over London looking for work and carrying his shoes to save the leather. Personally but not professionally reticent, Guinness is especially good on Gielgud, Guthrie, Martita Hunt and Edith Evans: and no one, so far as I know, has written better or more persuasively about Ernest Milton's electrifying genius and the self-destructive talent for spoilage that went with it.

Spike Milligan is if anything an even tougher nut, approachable only, biographically speaking, on his own avowed principle of crack or be cracked. Infinitely sentimental with children, animals and anyone else not offering to block his path, Milligan is apt to turn nasty like Caligula at the smallest sign of indocility from managements, colleagues (as a young Goon, he once had to be forcibly restrained from slashing Peter Sellers with a potato knife), family, friends and fans. His biographer has collected many lamentable stories of his disproportionately savage reactions, whether to an admirer asking for his autograph ("'Fan', said Spike angrily. 'She wasn't a fan. She was just an autograph mugger'"), or to the celebrated Coventry audience who responded so unenthusiastically to his bullying that he smashed his trumpet, walked off and staged a fake suicide with an authentic hangman's noose in his dressing-room. Hard not to feel a certain sympathy for the BBC which, by all accounts including Milligan's, has consistently underrated, blocked and frustrated his attempts to break new ground as a satirist.

But even the most faint-hearted reader is likely to emerge from Pauline Scudamore's clear, perceptive and dispassionate biography with increased respect for Milligan. He was born in India in 1918, son of an Irish NCO billed all over the subcontinent as "India's Soldier Showman" (Milligan senior was regularly cross-questioned about his Burmese experiences by a Captain Blair, who subsequently published his findings under the name of Orwell). Brought up by admiring and obedient servants, young Milligan had no sooner learnt to see himself as heir to the glamour, power and glory of a superior race than he was decanted at the age of fifteen (when army retrenchment put his father out of a job for good) into the drab, anonymous ranks of the South London working class. Ill-educated, unsophisticated, unwanted, without confidence or prospects, he never entirely got over his own and his parents' hopeless impotence and humiliation in the years that followed. The shock seems to have conditioned him as profoundly as a similar betrayal affected the young Dickens: Milligan's comic vision grew, like Dickens's, from the horror of that rejection by a hostile and indifferent world. It explains the risks he takes on stage, the sense of imminent (and sometimes actual) disaster he brings with him, the irresistible mad triumphs, his sympathy with the afflicted, inarticulate or inanimate ("I love it", he said once, when asked why he took the trouble to restore the Goblin Oak in Kensington Gardens, "because I don't have to make it laugh"), and his frequent deployment, with the rest of us: "I was in the hands of the human race," he said, "which, as you know, can be the very worst thing to be in the hands of."

Roving raconteur

Keir Elam

JAN KOTT
The Theater of Essence and Other Essays
218pp. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. $19.95.
08101 06647.

There are few critics who could get away with the kind of bold protagonism that Jan Kott proposes in this collection of essays, written – and most of them already published – between 1968 and 1983. What holds both the individual chapters and the book as a whole together is an omnipresent "I" which is no mere reflective critical mind but a full-bodied participant in the events described. This narrator-protagonist is easy enough to identify: it is Ulysses, the wise old exile doomed to ever new adventures in strange worlds. In Kott's Odyssey, indeed, "world" and "theatre" become virtual synonyms, since he places the stage at the very centre of the major political and intellectual happenings of our time, so what looks at first glance like a voyage across a *mundus theatrorum* in search of a "theatre of essence" becomes also and inevitably a reflection on the *theatrum mundi*, an anthropological quest for the essence of theatre as expression of different cultural conditions. We are taken across space from Warsaw to Kyoto and through time from Ibsen to Brook.

Like many a teller of travelling tales, Kott is actually more convincing on what he has left behind, namely the theatre of his native Poland, than on what he sees along the way. There are magnificent essays here on Witkiewicz and Gombrowicz, in which the author's position as mediator between cultures pays off triumphantly: Kott is able to explain to us, with urgent and eloquent reference to his own experience, the centrality of these two great dramatists to Polish intellectual life before and after the war. But the further he moves from home, the weaker becomes the guiding and unifying "I": the narrator is one seafaring raconteur among many. Thus Kott's Barthesian adventure in the empire of signs, ie, his endeavour to decipher Noh, Bunraku and Kabuki theatres, achieves neither the descriptive exotiism nor the semiological lucidity of the French master (how, for example, can the choreography of Noh be "not symbolic" but at the same time represent "the signs of an alphabet"?). Fortunately, however, the main narrative line of the collection is strictly Polish, culminating in the author's enthusiastic appreciation of Kantor's essentialism and his impatient dismissal of Grotowski's metaphysicism.

What most powerfully characterizes Kott as an essayist is the way the wandering voyager role takes over his expository style. As narrator-hero he goes in for somewhat baroque plot structures, and indeed much of the exhilaration, not to mention the exasperation, provided by these essays comes simply from following Kott's plots: what will come next? He is never banally linear, never predictably coherent in his progressions, but vaunts vertiginous leaps between distant lands and events (from Ionian time-space warp to the Berkeley campus in 1969) and surprising forays across disciplinary frontiers (Kott is journalist, aesthetician, anthropologist, ideologist, semiologist, psychologist and man of the world by turns). When Eric Bentley observes of Kott that "there is no methodology in his madness" he is doubtless right on the final results but it is precisely this critic's restless poaching in different methodological terrains that constitutes his peculiar brand of cultivated cultural criticism. Usually this is less a pretence to scientific rigour than a mode of rhetorical decoration, an attempt to give a contemporary flavour to the exposition, as in his occasional references to deconstruction or the use, not always judicious, of semiologese: Witkiewicz's "Pure Form", we learn, is really equivalent to "deep structure"; oriental actors wear something called "semantic makeup"; post-war drama introduces the "icon of the absurd". These terms, in logical options are misleading and, in their non-technical context, clumsy.

Still, in the end, even such passing vanities contribute to the highly theatrical, actively spectacular nature of Kott's style, which is a constant show of historical and cultural prestidigitation, a relentless pulling of assorted treasures from a traveller's cap. And if Kott belies it all off, including that intrusive "I", it is because he manages passionately, eloquently, movingly, to make the experience of theatre, starting with his own, seem a true adventure, a once noble, dangerous and important. The final essay in the volume, a kind of aesthetic manifesto, is entitled "The Serious in Theatre"; no one argues better than Kott for taking theatre – essentially – seriously.

Human nature, human error

Anthony Hicks

JONATHAN KEATES
Handel: The man and his music
346pp. Gollancz. £12.95.
0575035730

Jonathan Keates's tercentenary tribute to Handel combines biography with comment on most of the composer's output, the main emphasis being on the dramatic works. A final chapter surveys changing attitudes to Handel from his death to the present day. Sketches of the various local backgrounds to Handel's cosmopolitan life and appreciative overviews of several aspects of eighteenth-century culture are among the more valuable features. *Opera seria* is for once treated as a viable form of music drama, its formal structures seen as a valid means of containing and intensifying the expression of high passion. There are good accounts of the semi-satirical operas *Flavio*, *Partenope* and *Serse*, a genre for which Keates shows special sympathy, and in general the space devoted to the operas is appropriate to their importance. Like others before him Keates is keen to demonstrate Handel's understanding of human nature as revealed in his musical characterizations. The composer's preoccupation as a dramatist is amiably summed up as "the compassionate scrutiny of his fellow men".

These virtues, however, have to be filtered effortfully out of an exuberant flood of information and opinion, much of it questionable in relevance, unreliable in detail or obscure in sense. One stated aim is "to make accessible to the general reader facts about the man and his music which are otherwise available only in specialized publications". It is true that recent scholarly literature has been diligently mined, but the notion of general accessibility is swiftly abandoned as Keates drops untranslated quotations in several languages into his text and deploys wide-ranging musical and literary comparisons involving authors and composers by no means "generally" known. The virtuosity compels admiration but seldom contributes to real understanding.

Confidence in both the main narrative and the profusion of incidental comment is undermined by the persistent occurrence of minor factual errors and the inadequacy of the documentation. Despite a set of notes ostensibly covering "material not found in Deutsch's documentary biography" many statements remain unsubstantiated. One would like to know why Keates considers that Queen Anne's grant of a pension to the foreigner Handel was "a royal breach of the law" (which law?), or where he found the eye-witness report that Handel "descanted extemporaneously" on the organ at his last concert. It is particularly disconcerting to find Keates repeating the usual libel that Madame Kielmansegg was the mistress of George I while simultaneously recommending the book (by Ragnhild Hatton) that proves she was the king's half-sister. Meanwhile basic biographical information is missed. Handel's appointment as composer to the Chapel Royal in 1723, for example, is never mentioned and Keates seems unaware of the music written for that establishment. In 1727 it was certainly not "a decade since Handel had composed an anthem to English words": at least four anthems were written in the early 1720s, together with the A major Te Deum.

The music itself is discussed without benefit of musical examples in a style epitomized early on by the declaration that the modest cantata *Tu fedel? tu costante?* "shows an integration of numbers so absolute as to make the mocking simplicity of the final aria a logical counterpoise to the hysterical turbulence of the opening sinfonia". The over-indulgent adjectives ("mocking", "logical" and "hysterical" are all unjustified) and the *non sequitur* based on a false premiss (the arias and sinfonia of the cantata make a satisfying group but are in no sense integrated) are typical of much that follows, though several devices are used. There is the sweeping generalization, not always meaningful or well expressed ("The opera's enduring strength is that *Alcina* becomes what we choose to make of it"). There is the easy grand assertion ("Dopo l'orrore" in *Ottone* may be "a splendid illustration of Handel's structural mastery", but as Keates does not describe the structure or explain what makes it masterly the reader is none the wiser). There are quasi-technical descriptions of particular passages, often inaccurate or insensitive to salient features of the music (the opening of *Zadok the Priest* is hardly "a gloriously simple outburst of D major acclamation"; it is the unexpected twists away from the tonic key that generate its sense of expectancy). And there is pure waffle. All that Keates can say of "I know that my Redeemer liveth" is that its "power defies analysis because its music is in a sense invisible, a clear current of unforced expressiveness supported on the sketchiest of basses". It is not as if nothing concrete can usefully be said about this famous song. Handel's employment of a "slumber" motive in dotted rhythm to represent the righteous dead ("them that sleep") deserves a few sentences in itself; when the soprano's promise of redemption soars above this motive the music is as powerfully symbolic as anything in Bach.

The most insidious errors are those arising from plausible-sounding but misguided attempts at original scholarship. Few readers will be equipped to detect that new ideas on Cuzzoni's sensational appearance in a brown dress and on the possible participation of Italian singers in the 1727 Coronation Anthems are based on faulty interpretations of evidence. Keates is at his least helpful on the subject of Handel's borrowings. Only specialists will be aware that the many instances of borrowing cited are mostly trivial or highly disputable additions to those mentioned in earlier literature, better-known and more important examples being passed over. The section on *Israel in Egypt* contains the main discussion of the topic, reasonably enough, but Keates perversely avoids identifying any of the major borrowings in that oratorio: the "general reader" is apparently expected to know all about them. In the discussion itself Keates is chiefly concerned to defend Handel on the grounds that everybody else borrowed, though the evidence offered for this view (Durante's acknowledged arrangements of Alessandro Scarlatti, and Vivaldi's use of a complete Handel aria in a pasticcio) is irrelevant. As far as present knowledge goes (and the latest research only reinforces it) Handel's methods of using material by other composers appear to be unique and fundamental to his technique of composition. No other field of study is likely to yield more insight into "the man and his music", but Keates skirts round it, preferring to score spurious points in the game of "spot the borrowing" before a readership in no position to challenge him. Here, as elsewhere, a show of learning displaces thoughtful exploration of the ways of genius.

Countering the rumours

April FitzLyon

SHEILA HODGES
Lorenzo da Ponte: The life and times of Mozart's librettist
274pp. Grafton. £12.95.
0246120010

Lorenzo da Ponte has two considerable titles to fame: his collaboration with Mozart, when he was in his late thirties; and his self-appointed mission to introduce Italian culture to America, which he pursued with considerable energy and success from the age of seventy until his death at eighty-nine. The intervening periods of his life were – *pace* Sheila Hodges in her new biography of da Ponte – typical for a small-time eighteenth-century adventurer: he was debauched in his youth; always an intriguer; only intermittently truthful; and always involved in unsuccessful and sometimes shady financial dealings; very gifted, yet, as one of his ex-employers commented, "he carries within him, and will always carry, a canker which eats away all the roots of his good fortune". He was his own worst enemy.

This canker probably originated in his adolescence for, born in 1749 in the ghetto of Ceneda in the Venetian Republic, he was converted to Christianity at his father's wish and his name changed when he was fourteen. He was made to study for the priesthood, for which he had no vocation; and this probably accounts for his flawed personality. He received an excellent education, and his knowledge and love of literature were deep and genuine. However, the fact that he eventually became a fully fledged priest made his wild oats seem particularly blameworthy, and when he later married and produced a family (in London) he had to become very evasive about his past. His extensive travels were due to his unfortunate behaviour: he was banished from Venice for debauchery; he was banished from Vienna because of some very scurrilous verses concerning Leopold II; and he had to leave England in a hurry for the United States because of debt. Sheila Hodges resents his being called an adventurer – but how else can one describe him?

Da Ponte's stay in Vienna, where Joseph II supported him, was the highlight of his career. He was poet to the Imperial Theatres, and his libretti for Salieri, for some other now-forgotten composers and for Mozart were a great success. At the time, he considered Martin y Soler to be the greatest of these composers; but he later realized his mistake, and said of himself and Mozart, arrogantly but prophetically, "We are eternal". The few recorded facts about this collaboration are very well known; what we don't know is to what extent Mozart controlled and influenced his poet; judging from some of da Ponte's other libretti, it was probably a good deal. Be that as it may, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Cosi fan tutte* remain some of the best libretti ever written.

In America, da Ponte had a hard time; theatre poets were not much in demand when he arrived there in 1805. He had outlived his epoch, and entered a new civilization. But his desire to teach Americans to appreciate everything Italian, his zest and energy, and his real gifts as a teacher eventually won through. Not only was he made the first professor of Italian at Columbia College (now University), but it was due to his efforts that the first Italian Opera House was built in New York (1833). He had become a venerable and much-appreciated old scholar; in order to maintain that reputation, and to counter unfortunate rumours about him spread by other Italian immigrants, between 1823 and 1830 da Ponte published his very unreliable memoirs. Much less diverting than those of his crony, Casanova, and very inferior to those of his contemporaries and compatriots, Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi, they tell us little of what we want to know – about Mozart, for example – and much that we could dispense with.

Sheila Hodges has assembled a great deal of information about da Ponte, but it remains somehow undigested, and as a result in this book he does not stand out clearly as a product of his epoch. She is most at home and at her best on his work in America. Obviously, in a book such as this, aimed at the general reader rather than at specialists, only a cursory analysis of da Ponte's libretti can be given; those interested in his writings will find Patrick J. Smith's *The Tenth Muse* (London, 1971) and Jean-François Labie's essays in his edition of da Ponte's *Mémoires et libretti* (Paris, 1980) more rewarding.

Sheila Hodges clearly admires da Ponte greatly, and this book is something of an attempt to whitewash him; she feels that "other commentators" – there are not many of us – have been too hard on him. For my part, I am unrepentant; but da Ponte would be delighted to be so consistently given the benefit of the doubt – that is what he had always hoped for.

Pedalling hard

Roger Nichols

MICHAEL MURRAY
Marcel Dupré: The work of a master organist
259pp. Northeastern University Press. $25 (paperback, $10.95).
0930350669

No one, I imagine, is inclined to dispute that Marcel Dupré was a master organist, as the title of this book proclaims. A long life full of adoring crowds and genuflecting critics, a list of pupils that includes Jehan and Marie-Claire Alain, Pierre Cochereau, Jeanne Demessieux, Jean Langlais, Gaston Litaize and Olivier Messiaen, the post of organist at St-Sulpice, the Directorship of the Paris Conservatoire: when Dupré died in 1971 he was undoubtedly the world's most famous organist and one of the most widely admired and respected figures in French musical life. Unfortunately, the winning of fame, admiration and respect does not of itself make any artist a rewarding sitter for the biographer's brush.

It has to be said that much of Michael Murray's book is rather dull. The author knew Dupré and his wife and has interviewed several of his pupils, but beyond doing his duty in these respects he has not felt it necessary to give any real picture of the world of the Paris organist in general, still less of what was going on in that city outside the organ lofts. This is all the more strange since he quotes Dupré as declaring that "to reunite the organ with the musical mainstream was the central mission of his life as an artist". What Murray is left with is a life of unremitting hard work lived by a man of high principles and enormous technical gifts, a loyal, non-revolutionary professional, bountifully endowed with tact and common sense. Nearly all the salient features of such an existence are bound to resist the attentions of cold print. Murray does not set out to describe Dupré's own music in detail, but he does try from time to time to give us the flavour of his improvisations – predictably, without success. Some of the most interesting parts of the book deal with the question of organ technique and here we get a glimpse of the logical mind which, allied to a sympathetic personality, made Dupré such a successful teacher. He was severe, for instance, in insisting on the acquisition of a perfect legato, without gap or overlap, and maintained that as long as an organist had mastered this he did not need to play staccato to counteract the effect of a resonant building. But when Murray tries to bring to life the occasions for which this formidable technique was designed, the services and the recitals (from the whole of Bach by memory downwards), one's heart goes out to him. To a great extent he is forced to rely on newspaper reviews and particularly, in covering Dupré's American tours, on contributions to *The Diapason*, in which the headlines give an all-too-accurate promise of what lies beneath: "Marcel Dupré Heard by a Great Throng in Philadelphia Church" is one of the more eye-catching examples.

The only hope of bringing off such a narrowly conceived enterprise would have been to enter into it in a critical spirit. In his *Traité d'improvisation à l'orgue*, Dupré writes that "one must acquire a clear perception – through the habit of methodical analysis carried out in an order adopted once for all". It is precisely this predictability, transferred from analysis into performance, that has been held against him, and in the neighbourhood of the Three Choirs Festival elderly gentlemen will tell you that, when it came to improvising from the heart, Dupré was not a patch on Herbert Brewer of Gloucester. But for Murray Dupré can do no wrong. Even the mild criticisms of the *Musical Times* reviewer in 1932 (written, incidentally, in a terse and entertaining English that erupts like someone stepping on a 32-foot Bombard) are dismissed as striking "an unbalanced note, a pathological discord, that bespoke a universal malaise". Balance (and imagination) are, sadly, what this biography lacks. For these one can turn instead to Dupré's music; and with his centenary year upon us it is to be hoped we shall have the chance – not just the Preludes and Fugues, but perhaps the *Symphonie-Passion* and *Le Chemin de la croix* as well.

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The hunter's virtues

Christopher Hope

SIR PERCY FITZPATRICK
Jock of the Bushveld
Abridged by Dorothy Fleischer
Illustrated by E. Caldwell and A. J. Butler
275pp. Viking Kestrel. £8.95.
0670806935

Jock of the Bushveld is a curious, potent mixture of charm and savagery which has survived both to remain readable. The life-story of a loyal, ferocious hunting dog in the Transvaal Bushveld of the gold rush, as told by a young transport rider, it has remained popular ever since it was first published in 1907. Now here is an excellent, abridged version that will find many new readers. If today its charm seems rather suspect and its savagery excessive then this has to do with literary fashions, and they have never been a reliable guide to African realities. The story of Jock is a hunter's tale. It is dominated by the chase, the kill, the narrow escape and the fatal mistake. It is full of blood, teeth and bullets.

The young narrator, on behalf of whom Percy FitzPatrick makes not the slightest pretence that he is anybody other than his own young self, lives for the hunt. His bull-terrier, he makes clear, is a peerless tracker and ruthless fighter who will attack anything. These are the qualities that make a "good" dog and as the narrator loses no time in telling us, "good hunting dogs were as rare as good men". Jock, of course, dominates the adventures. His master displays the hunter's virtues of patience, caution and courage. Jock, by contrast, is headstrong, mercurial, stubborn and merciless when going for the kill. FitzPatrick is most skilful in resolving their contrasting personalities in the excitement of the chase when dog and master merge into a formidable force.

The life of the men who drove the transport wagons on the long trek from Delagoa Bay to the gold mines of the Highveld was not easy and FitzPatrick does not glamorize it unduly. The transport drivers fed off the game they found. They hunted for the pot. More likely to affect the modern reader than the hunting scenes are the descriptions given of relations between the races. The attitudes of the white drivers towards their black "boys" are patronizing, supercilious and frequently cruel, and FitzPatrick makes no attempt to soften the prevailing notion that black men were feckless drunkards who needed iron discipline. It has to be said, however, that all he is doing is to reflect caricatures widely accepted at the time, and people said so. What is more, the South African reader may be further embarrassed when recognizing that such views are still much the same almost a hundred years later – though, of course, no one says so now. In any event, nothing in his reference to relations between master and servant equals the description of the methods used to drive a team of eighteen unwilling trek oxen over a steep and rocky mountain pass. FitzPatrick recounts how a stubborn animal is stabbed, burnt and suffocated in order to persuade it to move. And although he deplores the cruelty involved, he relates the details because these were the methods customarily employed and he wishes to record them.

FitzPatrick has left a unique portrait of the Bushveld, its game, veld fires, rainstorms, its rich insect life of the Hottentot God and the tok-tok beetle. But *Jock of the Bushveld* is an adventure book. We are there when the spoor of the wounded buck is found, when the leopard attacks, or the crocodile leaps from the river, punctured by assegais. The onward rush of the narrative vividly conveys experiences deeply felt and recounted with great energy and good humour. This abridged version with its fine illustrations makes the tale run faster and more furiously than ever.

Algy Pug and friends

Humphrey Carpenter

GEORGE PERRY with ALFRED BESTALL
A Bear's Life: Rupert
169pp. Pavilion. £9.95.
0907516769

Alfred Bestall was already a respected *Tatler* and *Punch* regular when he took over Rupert Bear in the *Daily Express* in 1935, filling a vacancy created by the failing eyesight of Rupert's inventor, Mary Tourtel, who had drawn and written the strip since its inception in 1920. Thereafter Bestall produced Rupert, Rupert, and nothing but Rupert for three decades. For years he did not sign the strip, out of respect for Mrs Tourtel, who was still alive.

There was something peculiarly appealing about Rupert from the start, even in Tourtel's rather lame stories. "The Little Lost Bear", as the series was originally entitled, seemed the perfect material for adventure. The very blankness of his features suggested one of nature's victims, though the check scarf and trousers hinted at a certain independence of character, while the unashamedly human hands banished any fuss about anthropomorphism, and allowed him to get on with the adventure as efficiently as the ten-year-old he really was.

The inimitable rhyming couplets were largely the work of Mrs Tourtel's husband, squat cigar-smoking night news editor of the *Express* (the couple were childless, and he is a bachelor – no child has ever played the slightest part in the creation of Rupert). Bestall, when he took over, brought a spice to the Rupert mixture. His *Tatler* work consisted largely of drawing (very skilful) pretty girls in semi-undress and all this had to be abandoned when he climbed on to the Rupert treadmill, but he injected a considerable eccentricity into the stories, and peopled them with curiously unforgettable characters.

The mere names are enough to bring back pleasurable thrill to any well-read ex-child: Wise Old Goat, the Chinese Conjuror, Uncle Grizzly, Ping Pong, Edward Trunk, Algy Pug, the Professor; there was nothing quite like a wet afternoon with a Rupert Annual. The tales hovered excitingly on the edge of science fiction in the days before that genre had really been developed, and had a deadpan-mind quality of their own, derived from the just position of cosy Nutwood with sinister machines, lifts that go down to China, inventors' houses full of traps. (Bestall seems to have had a distinct obsession with tunnels, underground railways, land-submarines and the like.) And he could always draw – in the midst of the animal characters – a thoroughly believable human face.

George Perry does not go in for any analysis of the Rupert components, Freudian or otherwise, but contents himself with some amiable patter about Bestall's career and the goings-on in the *Express* offices. In any case Rupert enthusiasts will buy the book for the complete Rupert stories in it and it serves well as a fifth birthday tribute to Rupert (and a ninety-third birthday tribute to Bestall). Even if at the end the whole creative process surrounding such figures remains a bit mysterious, one is left with the feeling that Rupert, like some other cartoon characters, is really a timeless folk-hero.

"The rabbits arrive", one of Beatrix Potter's illustrations to The Rabbits' Christmas Party. *From Anne Stevenson Hobbs and Joyce Irene Whalley's catalogue* Beatrix Potter: The V & A Collection *(240pp. Victoria and Albert Museum and Frederick Warne. £30. 0 7232 3260 1).*

To Bear, not to B

Bear, the creature to whom this poem is addressed, lived in the same house as a cat called (Mrs) B, of whom he was son, half-brother and, in due course, husband. Bear himself was of indeterminate species, and although he would sometimes stand on his hind legs and emit a shrill piping sound not unlike a purr, opinions remained divided as to whether he were really cat, dog, bear, or some kind of prancing fur-covered insect. Following his tragic death, his friends have urged me to publish these occasional verses to the TLS, a journal he would always eat his way through at supper.

To Bear, not to B
The question is that:

How can you bear
To be such an unnatural cat,
Dizzily dozing,
Natily indolent, spivishly fat?

Other cats bear
Their essential felinity more
Felicifically,
Become red, with a catch, in tooth and claw.

But you! You bare
Your spoiled spiv's tummy to the sky

Soprano purrs,
Primp and prattle, propping your ...

Like a soft toy
In some furry purlieu, daze ...
... of bird or ...

How came you, Bear,
To be such an uncatchural nat?

Answer me that!

ROGER SCRUTON

Middle English mores

Heather O'Donoghue

SELINA HASTINGS
Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady
Illustrated by Juan Wijngaard
129pp. Walker. £4.95.
0744502950
GENE KEMP
Jason Bodger and the Priory Ghost
140pp. Faber. £6.95.
0571136451

These two books provide children with views of the Middle Ages which could hardly be more different. The setting of *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady* is the court of King Arthur – luxurious, idle and glamorous. The Middle Ages of *Jason Bodger and the Priory Ghost* are more in the Monty Python mould – dirty, dangerous, anachronistic and hilariously primitive. The ladies of King Arthur's court are likened to peacocks in their fine attire; Jason Bodger's heroine has a dog which cleans her teeth by licking them.

Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady is based on the fifteenth-century poem "Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell", but the most familiar version of this story is Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*. The plot turns on correctly answering the question "What is it that women most desire?" The proper, and magically liberating response – "their will" – is disturbingly ironic in the context Chaucer has created for the tale, since the Wife of Bath is ostensibly an example to men of the dangers of a strong-minded, independent and sexually active woman, though she ends the story by having the bride defer to her new husband in all matters, as a prerequisite to living happily ever after. Naturally, any element of feminist debate is lacking in *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady*, with the result that the riddle seems oddly out of place – however did the issue of women having their own say crop up in this elegant tale of brave, courteous knights and quietly devoted ladies? But the formal timeless elegance of Arthur's court, beautifully depicted in the elaborate illustrations, is the perfect foil for the most compelling aspect of the book – the sickening ugliness of the Loathly Lady herself. It is impossible not to shudder at the expressive pictures of what the text calls "a poor monster, a freak". And the narrative prose, limpid, chilling and grave, invests the story with a drama and horror quite absent from the Middle English versions.

The question of whether the Loathly Lady story is likely to interest children is uncomfortably raised by this re-telling. Gawain, who is forced to marry the "poor monster", is understandably apprehensive on his wedding night, but those ignorant of his duties will be more inclined to sympathize with poor Guinever, who is shown actually kissing the Loathly Lady, in order to give a noble example to the rest of the court. Gawain, his wife transformed to a lovely lady during the night, stays in bed with her until midday – a signal to grown-ups, not children, like the rather ill-judged and sly "consummatum est" on a scroll among the wallhangings in the final illustration.

Jason Bodger and the Priory Ghost is much more straightforwardly addressed to children. Its aggressively demotic style may even be distasteful to adults. (Aren't characters who say things like "I fought it was but it ain't" just figures of fun?) The book relentlessly disparages grown-ups and is full of a Shandyesque debunking of its own text – cheery footnotes apologize for boring descriptive bits or advise the reader to skip to the next page.

The author proudly tells her readers that they won't learn anything useful from this book. This is of course disingenuous, for the book is a sustained attempt to excite children's curiosity about the period. Several footnotes, with calculated carelessness, tell the reader to "ask some grown-up hanging about", or even, with a chilly whiff of the history textbook, just to "find out". Although the Middle Ages is defined – as so often – negatively, with a long list of what "they" didn't have, the device of alternating chapters set in the twentieth century with those set in the twelfth is very instructive. The narrative is fast, strong and funny, and in between the jokey bloodthirstiness there are episodes of sudden, gripping unpleasantness.

Some children might find *Jason Bodger and the Priory Ghost* patronizing in its direct address to them, and in its thinly veiled didactic aims. But many will gleefully with its author and obey her injunctions. *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady* will also make them ask questions, but more uneasy ones.

Suffering into pleasure

S. S. Prawer

WILLIAM PATRICK DAY
In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A study of Gothic fantasy
208pp. University of Chicago Press. £14.95.
0226138909

"A sad tale's best for winter", says poor doomed Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*; "I have one of sprites and goblins." The Victorians agreed, and ghost-stories became as much part of the Christmas season as turkey and plum pudding. Between Shakespeare and Dickens, however, a new genre had intervened to darken and complicate the popular tale of terrors told at the fireside to induce a *frisson* made delightful by the apparent safety of the circle within which it was narrated.

The "Gothic" fantasy-tale, which began as the literary equivalent of aristocratic architectural fancies at Strawberry Hill and Fonthill Abbey, soon became a popular entertainment that mythologized, among other things, middle-class family constellations. "The thematic focus of the Gothic", William Patrick Day writes in *In the Circles of Fear and Desire*, "concerns the nature of masculine and feminine identity and the nature of the family that shapes that identity". And again: "The fear, anxiety, terror and dread that are both the subject and effect of the Gothic are not . . . free-floating thrills but reflect the essential insecurities of nineteenth-century readers . . . . The great power of the Gothic stems from its capacity to transform these fears into pleasure." Day pursues some of these fears and pleasures through a number of well-chosen fictions, from *The Castle of Otranto* to *Dracula*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Turn of the Screw*, and he examines more briefly their twentieth-century legacy in films from *King Kong* to *Psycho* and *Halloween*, in the detective story ("Sherlock Holmes is a fundamentally Gothic character"), in some modernist texts, and in the mythology that aspires to become the "science" of psychoanalysis.

The prominence of Freud in Professor Day's book is not fortuitous; for he admits that what he here calls the "Gothic" corresponds exactly to what Freud called the "uncanny" – *das Unheimliche*. The German word unites the "un-homely" with the "un-secret": the transportation of readers into regions in which they cannot feel at home with the revelation, the bringing to light, of what had been hidden, secreted away, repressed. The dialectic interplay of "home" and the "homely" with "secrecy" and "mystery" is central to a body of tales that concern themselves, in ways Day examines in detail, with questions of masculine and feminine identity shaped by, and determining, family togetherness. Day's investigations confirm what Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (1977) had already taught many of us to appreciate: that what we think of as the "Victorian" family in fact began to take shape in the late eighteenth century. The sentimental ideal of feminine identity in the Gothic novel, and the threatening patriarch transformed into enthralling and terrifying Gothic villain, had already been convincingly limned by Elizabeth MacAndrew in *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (1979), to whom Day rightly pays tribute; but his book takes MacAndrew's analyses further by integrating them into a patterned series of social, psychological and literary oppositions.

One such opposition – that of "Gothic" and "Romantic" – seems to me questionable in itself and questionably supported. Day cites Coleridge on the Fancy and the Imagination but makes no reference at all to "Christabel", or to the dark Romanticism of parts of "The Ancient Mariner", "Lamia", *Zastrozzi*, or Polidori's Byronic *The Vampyre*. Nor does he feel it necessary to look beyond English and American literature to other Romanticisms: to the tales of Tieck and Hoffmann, for instance; and this despite the fact that practitioners of Gothic fiction (and – even more – their enemies) looked to Germany at least as much as to Italy as the very fount of the terrors these tales evoked. Almost all the books which inflamed Catherine Morland's imagination have real or pretended German connections – *Horrid Mysteries*, for instance, is an adaptation of Grosse's *Der Genius*; "Monk" Lewis consciously made himself an intermediary between German and English terror-literature; and when Poe claimed that the terrors in which he dealt were "not of Germany, but of the soul", he was paying a left-handed compliment to a connection which can be traced in his own work as it can in that of many other writers in the "Gothic" tradition.

Day's parochialism, his refusal to look beyond the Anglo-American literary tradition, is compounded by the dubious quality of his infrequent references to Romantic writings in England. What nonsense it is to say of Keats's "The Eve of St Agnes" (the name of whose heroine Day gets wrong) that "one melts into dreams and upon awakening, finds the dream true and that truth a path out of the actual world". The awakening, far from leading out of the actual world, takes the lovers "into the storm", which is part of whatever "actual" world they lived in; and the only escape from that world is our common escape into death and the memory constituted by the poem itself. And what a tin ear one must have to offer one's readers "Nature ne'er did betray the heart that loved her" as a quotation from "Tintern Abbey"! That quotation is part of an irritating sloppiness which makes Day speak of Dorian Gray as Dorian Grey, Lady Bracknell as Lady Bracknall, Poe's Madeline as Madelaine, General Spielsdorf as General Speilsdorf, von Aschenbach as Van Aschenbach, Northrop Frye as Northrup Frye, Dorothea Krook as Dorothea Kreck. This sloppiness is compounded by misprints that have escaped the proof-readers of the Chicago University Press.

It would be wrong, however, to allow such irritations to distract us from Day's more valid arguments. One of the most interesting points he makes is that the Gothic novel and its later progeny are misunderstood if one sees them as a revelation of the unconscious, as an apprehension of the numinous perverted into the uncanny, as a mythology of our "dark" side, *tout court*. A closer examination reveals, rather, that the visions of "Gothic" writers are shaped by notions of selfhood induced by the societies within which, and for which, they were written. This case is well made, and much post-Jungian nonsense is swept away by Day's resolute insistence on the "vital relationship of the imagination with the real world", on "the unbroken connections between our imaginative life and our economic, social and political life". Day has here pointed to paths of investigation that may be followed by others: the prominence in the Gothic novel, from the first, of disputed property and attempts to secure it by illicit means; and the political symbolism of many Gothic settings and incidents which is more intricate than may be gathered from Leslie Fiedler's still stimulating *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1961). But Day is surely throwing out the baby with the bath-water when he assures us that the monsters of fantasy do not come, in these fictions, "from deep in our minds". The figures of the Double and of the deathless wanderer through time, the theme of descent, the opposition of light and dark, subterranean passage and alpine heights, labyrinth and straight road, are surely features to which "Gothic" fiction gives a temporal shape and colouring, but which have tap-roots into deeper, more trans-social and trans-cultural levels than Day seems prepared to allow. A reading of Mircea Eliade's *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* may suggest some of the resonances to which Day has closed his ears.

For an author so explicitly concerned with the social foundations of the genre he has set himself to investigate Day is surprisingly insouciant about his use of the term "the reader". Who is this "reader"? There are no analyses, no explanations along the lines suggested by Ingarden, or Altick, or Escarpit, or Jauss – the space occupied by the reader remains distressingly empty. That occupied by the Gothic novel itself, on the other hand, is very well described in a passage which speculates on what some nineteenth-century readers may have found in it:

> In the space between the worlds of religion and myth and science, between romance and realism, between soul and psyche, between inner and outer life, nineteenth-century readers saw the source of their anxiety and fear; that is, in the failure of religious, scientific, and philosophical systems to create a sense of wholeness and unity in the self and in the world, which would have allowed individuals to define their

The Size of the World

To say it is enormous, or to search the thesaurus
For synonyms to its immensity will not express
The size of it. It dwarfs all our opinions
And knowledge, and even when we try to expand
Our vocabulary to take in the latest large
Idea, such as superstrings or ecology
Or the transcending of this or that category,
We are only inventing new conventions.
Something is left out in even the best new schema:
There is no room for happiness
Or the Holy Family on Xmas Eve
Or the price of eggs or something else so significant
That without it all the rest is vanity.
Nor is there any wisdom in such an admission;
It is as a watercolour of the ocean
To the ocean itself. But this can be a source
Of joy, or, lacking that, of a sweet and needful
Self-deception, a safety exit
To practical faith, not one connected
To what may be known but only to what may not.
This is the realm poetry particularly
Inhabits, the teasing out of thought
Into pleasing shapes, coiffing the minds
Of a happy few to some provisory accommodation
To their ignorance – without euphoria,
Without unfounded hope, and yet enchanted.
Oh, it is a realm isolate as Moctezuma's,
And, some have said, forlorn. But vivider,
For all that, than the actual universe
In which we bulk so small, and which impinges
Every split-second even on these complacent
Maunderings, suggesting other combinations,
More refined adaptions to the fact
Of all facts, the set of all sets, the sum
Of all summery days, when the sun shines
With Platonic brightness and the mind is inclined
To lazily number the ways I love you, and the cause
Of it: To wit, because you're fair, because
We've been together since the dawn of time, because
You're so fine a backseat driver, or because
You've got a way with words mine *and* yours.
By such means – poetry, love, what have you –
The universe can be contained, the world
Reduced to a manageable mass
Where superstrings may coexist
With the atoms of Democritus, though we know
All the while the world is larger
Than all these transcripts of our idle chatter.
Some things matter more than others: mothers
More than Coca-Cola, pigeons more than fleas.
Yet even these neglected categories
May abound in unthought possibilities.
Life's so rich, and life's only a part of it:
There are, as well, minerals and large machines,
Bricks and various gases – and, if *The Times* is right,
Six entirely new dimensions, ten
In all, and we may be, in every one,
A kind of sun unto our constituent
Genes, and our Roy Rogers too, a meaty
Stew of recombinant nuances;
Cities built, and histories, meals cooked,
Books read, scenes viewed, drawers opened and closed,
Glimpsed lovelinesses and horrors, which in
Some larger perspective, some stricter mind's
Accounting, are as the blow that ended
Tamburlaine and not of immediate importance.
Though, who knows, without some particular
Forgotten warlord we might not be here to share
This evanescing afternoon of broken-
Bottled pavements and friendly endlessness,
Friendly because no one cares. So life's a scream,
So what? What are we doing when we talk
Like this, unlistened to, a ballpoint
Pressed against the ruled paper's tenderness?

TOM DISCH

superstrings: particles viewed not as being composed of quarks but as a sequence of points in a ten-dimension universe.

own existence. The Gothic fantasy occupied this empty space, filled it through parody of these systematic visions that did not quite account for the world, and turned the anxiety and fear in that cultural gap, into pleasure, articulating and defusing the anxiety and fear that called it into existence.

The analyses that follow this statement substantiate a feeling many of us have had for a long time: that the imaginative life of a culture needs to be traced, not only in the canon of works seen and taught as permanently valuable literature, but also in writings that seem "simply a source of entertainment, at best not to be taken seriously, at worst, to be despised". This justifies, in some measure, Day's determined focusing on themes and motifs, all but ignoring the stylistic texture of the works he examines.

A particularly welcome demonstration to be found in this book is how the mode of "romance", which Northrop Frye has analysed in *The Secular Scripture* and elsewhere, is parodied or subverted in the "Gothic" mode. The theme of descent to a lower, demonic world, for instance, has a quite different tonality in the two modes. In the Gothic we tend to find no re-assent, no establishment of a new Eden; instead, we find the fragmentation of personality symbolized by the figure of the *Doppelgänger*, or the inhuman identity of the vampire.

This symbol of a truly Gothic identity is an inversion of human identity, a new creature, at one with the landscape of fear and terror in which it lives. The descent into the underworld leads to the rejection of human identity and the embracing of the monstrous. Death, the ultimate descent, results neither in transfiguration, as in a religious vision, in a return to inert matter, the scientific view; nor in a reaffirmation of human identity. Rather, it leads to the creation of a new being, the monstrous parody of the human. The Gothic does not simply create ambiguous or ironic romance, but subverts the mythology of the whole genre.

Bram Stoker's Dracula has therefore joined Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and his Creature as the most persistent image the Gothic mode has imprinted on the modern imagination – especially in the form which Tod Browning and James Whale, Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff, have given to these creatures of the nineteenth century in the first half of the twentieth. That Day gets the date of Browning's film wrong is, alas, no cause for surprise.

"A central fact about the genre", Day tells us, "is its announcement of its own discontinuity with the real world; it always makes its own artificiality and fictiveness clear." This seems to me highly misleading; for many of the authors of these fictions, from Mrs Radcliffe onwards, seem concerned, on the contrary, to give the greatest possible verisimilitude to their tales. Even where the supernatural is not explained away, as it usually is in Mrs Radcliffe, writers of uncanny tales like to include, among their characters, a rationalist who has to be convinced that supernatural irruptions into our world are indeed possible, or they adduce various types of "documentation" in ostensible support of fantastic happenings. Sometimes the narrator, or one of the narrators, is a credulous fool, like James Hogg's Wringham; sometimes he is a sceptic convinced against his will. Far from stressing discontinuity, tellers of these tales seek to show, by various means, that terrible unknown forces are, or have been, at work within our own world; that they may affect the lives of people not unlike ourselves; and that though the "other" world is not coterminous with the world we know in our waking lives, it is anything but "discontinuous" with it.

Nor do the analyses contained in this book substantiate its author's contention that these fictions enlist parody and subversion of other types of narrative "in the creation of a sense of formlessness": Different as they are in literary merit and stylistic distinction, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Dracula*, *The Turn of the Screw*, all reveal, at every point, the shaping and forming activity of their authors; and while the Chinese-box construction of *Melmoth the Wanderer* and the complexities of *Frankenstein*, Jan Potocki's *The Saragossa Manuscript* or E.T.A. Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs* may puzzle the first-time reader, their intricacies are logically resolvable, and anything but formless. Here as elsewhere Day would have profited by a study of Tzvetan Todorov's investigations of the structural peculiarities of some fantastic narratives. Nor is it true that in such tales "action can never be progressive, only circular" – unless you make this true of all narratives, in which case the statement becomes meaningless in its context. Heroines develop towards maturity, as in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or discover unsuspected resources within themselves which enable them to expel evil from their lives; as Mina Harker does in *Dracula*; villains are foiled and some of the good are occasionally rewarded; traditional or unorthodox means drive back the denizens of a nether world, bringing the story from A to B, or from A to Z, much as other forms of narrative do. The possibility of a replay – *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* or *Son of Frankenstein* – is always possible, of course; but that is true of most works which seek to draw a coherent story out of the flux of life. I am not denying that there are "circular" fictions in the Gothic mode – of course there are, and *Frankenstein* may well be held to be one of them; but one can find at least as many which are "progressive" in the sense Day here uses that term.

The more one looks into Day's, at first sight persuasive, generalizations, the more questionable they become. Take the statement: "in denying the meaningfulness of action, the genre denies the meaningfulness of the objective physical world". To this I would object that the "sublime" landscapes of Mrs Radcliffe have plenty of meaning, for the characters in the books and for the readership Mrs Radcliffe envisaged – meanings that can be investigated with the help of Edmund Burke's influential treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, whose importance for the creation of the "Gothic" world Day totally ignores. And is it not precisely because Mina Harker finds so much meaning within the relationships of her ordinary world that she is able to join Van Helsing so effectively in securing Dracula's discomfiture?

The trouble with this book is that it tends to take such insights as it has too far, and to ride them to death. Day is right, of course, to insist on the importance of male and female stereotypes, and to point to Van Helsing's description of Mina as "man's brain and woman's heart" – but does that make Mina ("the only female Gothic character who is not a virgin") an "androgyne"? Is she not, instead, a fully developed woman rather than a silly chit, who uses her woman's energy to organize her defence against a sinister threat? And what sense does it make to see Conrad's Marlow as "an essentially feminine figure", as one who accepts "a feminized identity"? Day points to Marlow's devotion to duty, adherence to conventional values, respect for the chief accountant and for cannibals that refrain from eating human flesh; but the fact that in all these respects he differs from Kurtz is hardly sufficient to make him "essentially" feminine or feminized.

In the end, however, the positive wins out. We can accept that Day rides the "androgyny" theme to death and beyond because he can also formulate the birth of the detective-hero – Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, and their numberless progeny – as effectively as this:

The Gothic fantasy lacks an effective hero, a character who through his own efforts can resolve the mystery and put an end to horror. The figure of the detective develops from the tension created by the lack of a true hero. He is, in effect, the hero Gothic world needs but cannot sustain. The presence of such a character revises the balance and focus of the genre, focusing on the restoration of order and meaning rather than on the steady dissolution of identity and the absolute instability of the world in which the characters live. Out of the Gothic fantasy critique of the romance grows a revised version of romance, and the romance quest hero returns in the guise of the detective.

We can forgive an author who mistakes the return of the Moonstone to India as a return "to the world of chaos" instead of a restoration of an order, the order from which it should never have been removed, if he can give us such spirited analyses of Le Fanu's "Carmilla" and James's *The Turn of the Screw* as are contained in this book, or such thought-provoking statements as the one which tells us that Holmes "resolves the detective, the voyeur and narrator, the quest hero and the patriarch – all the roles that he takes up and uses – into one heroic role, that of the scientist". And for all my disagreements with this book, I fully concur with its central argument and conclusion:

We know the Gothic world is a terrible place because nowhere in it is there room for real pleasure. We enjoy the Gothic novel because through it we find a way of transforming pain and suffering into pleasure. To recognize and accept pleasure as a fundamental aspect of our human life is not to ignore or escape the reality of pain, nor to refuse to see its place in our sense of identity. But the Gothic, in its consistent transformation of images of suffering into pleasure, its portrayal of the dead end of suffering and terrors of the pleasure impulse deformed into monstrousness, affirms that the most vital human impulse is the search for pleasure in its fullest and most imaginative forms. The continuing vitality of the Gothic tradition, its extraordinary hold on us, comes from its revelation, through the images of pain, death, and disintegration, of the possibilities of pleasure, life, and wholeness.

Everyone who, in future, concerns himself with the "Gothic" mode or with the Uncanny in literature, will have to come to terms with this flawed but important and stimulating treatise, which follows its splendidly descriptive title – *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* – with a motto culled from the mouth of Lieutenant Morgan in the film, *The Return of Count Yorga*: "Okay, first one who sees the vampire scream his ass off." Against this I would place another motto, culled from Novalis and more appropriate to the season in which the Gothic or uncanny tale is traditionally received with especial favour: "Wo keine Götter sind, walten Gespenster" – "where there are no gods, spectres hold sway".

The exuberant moment

John Gledson

MÁRIO DE ANDRADE
Macunaíma
Translated by E. A. Goodland
168pp. Quartet Books. £8.95.
0704325519

DARCY RIBEIRO
Maíra
Translated by E. H. Goodland and Thomas Colchie
353pp. Picador. £8.95 (paperback, £3.50).
0330286439

Brazilian fiction has always had a place for the Indians. Enslaved, infected with European diseases, robbed of their lands, or simply massacred – now reduced to a tiny proportion of the total population of the country (0.2 per cent) – they have kept the fascination which both natives and foreigners (from Montaigne to Lévi-Strauss) feel when faced with something so absolutely alien to our notions of civilization as to allow us to question those notions themselves.

For Brazilians, Indians pose an additional problem, or have done since the nineteenth century, when the newly independent country began to use them as symbols of its identity. Given the terrible historical – and ever-present – reality, poems and novels which used Indians in this way could hardly be realistic, but it would be wrong to dismiss them all as distortions or pure fantasies. Rather, in the poetry of Gonçalves Dias (himself part-Indian), and in the fiction of José de Alencar, the contradictions and tensions involved in the very idea of national identity found (often disguised) expression. *Iracema*, perhaps the best of Alencar's Indianist romances, is the story of the abandonment of an Indian girl by her (theoretically noble, but also crudely insensitive) Portuguese "warrior" lover.

Macunaíma and *Maíra*, which form part of this long tradition of fictional interest in Indians, have not appeared almost simultaneously by accident. They share a translator, who has taken his task seriously enough not only to consult the indispensable critical works which make *Macunaíma* comprehensible, but even to make "arduous voyages by canoe on the Rio Negro and by stern-wheeler on the Rio São Francisco". More than fifty years separate the two books, however. *Macunaíma* is a product of the 1920s (written in 1926–7, and published in 1928), a period of experimentation in Brazilian literature; it is perhaps the finest work by the leader of the Modernist movement. Yet it was for many years out of print in Brazil, and its recent popularity is partly due to a film made of it by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. It is a difficult book, for which Mário unashamedly pillaged anthropological works by Koch-Grünberg and others, to produce what he called a "rhapsody", and it is certainly not a normal novel. It is a remarkable blend of myth, folk-tale, tall story and linguistic parody, which recounts the career of its "hero without a character" and his journey from the depths of the Amazonian jungle to São Paulo, Mário's native city and then as now the largest, wealthiest and most "modernist" city in the country.

The translator, battling with immense problems, has pulled it off, and we should be grateful to him. It would be easy to quarrel with details, but they are unimportant beside the vigour of the prose, and the dedicated attempt to make the numerous mythical figures (as unfamiliar to most Brazilians as they are to us) come alive with all their comic gusto. The seemingly endless transformations undergone by such characters as Venceslau Pietro Pietra, a Peruvian river-trader turned São Paulo industrialist (alias Piaiman, the giant eater-of-men) are a lunatic reflection of Mário's original inspiration for this book, which lay, so he said, in the idea of the characterless hero himself. Whether he was aware of it nor not – undoubtedly he was – this in its turn was a reflection of the old obsession with national identity, how more overtly expressed as a lack (*Macunaíma* was originally to have been dedicated to Alencar).

This brilliant, genuine exotic of a book is the expression of a precarious moment of exuberance in Brazilian culture, always threatened by political events which dealt Mário's larger cultural ambitions a cruel blow when he was dismissed from his post with the government of São Paulo by Vargas's dictatorial régime in 1937. Darcy Ribeiro, an anthropologist by training, and famous in his own right as such, also has some of Mário's wider ambitions, and spent some years in exile during the worst period of military rule. His return to Brazil (where he is now Deputy Governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro), and the publication of *Maíra* in 1976, were early signs of a slow return to normality.

Maíra is much more a "novel" in the traditional sense than *Macunaíma*, but, in its descriptions of the jungle and above all of Indian creation myths, Ribeiro gives us (what Indianist fiction at its best always does) a sense of wonder and of the sheer difference between their world and ours. In his plot, which recounts the return of an Indian trained in the priest to his native village, Ribeiro asks the question: once one has stopped being an Indian – in other words, once one has come under prolonged contact with a technologically superior culture – can one ever return to one's place of origin? The answer, obviously enough when one follows it through, is not "always an Indian", but "always a Catholic". Or more accurately and more tragically, Indian and neither – another "hero without a character". Around the central plot, Ribeiro shows us the real world of the Amazon with its powerful and corrupt Indian Protection Service, its brutal and ambitious tradesmen and politicians, its "pacified" and "unpacified" Indians, its missionaries Protestant and Catholic, its greedy (and threatened) natural setting. Maíra is worthy of the larger tradition of which it forms a part, and, what is no less important, is an effective plea for the few remaining Brazilian Indians to be left in peace.

Standing and falling with the body

A. S. Byatt

DAVID PLANTE
The Catholic
151pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.95.
0701139692

David Plante is a serious artist. So much can be diagnosed from the feel of any page of this book taken at random – its deliberate spareness, its cunning baldness of statement. He used to write like Henry James, fine analyses of delicately shifting states of consciousness. Now he writes with self-conscious brutality, but still finely. I should not have used the word "self-conscious" so early in this review. I am going to need it quite often later on.

David Plante is also a moralist. *The Catholic* is the unflinching self-examination of the self-obsessed narrator and hero, Daniel Francoeur, who in the third person was the central son of the seven in Plante's trilogy, *The Francoeur Family*. In the end he classifies himself as a "minor fool". His folly is the self-consciousness which he can neither transcend nor evade, even for a moment. He judges himself. "If ever I wrote a novel, I thought, it would have to be saved, if it was in any way worthy to be saved, by something occurring in it which had nothing to do with me." This seems wise and just. Nothing of this kind occurs in this novel, which accordingly is not saved, as far as I can see. In *The Catholic* the word "saved" carries soteriological as well as aesthetic overtones.

Daniel Francoeur is obsessed with his own body. By an extension of this he is obsessed with the male body in general. He believes intermittently that this obsession is spiritual. That is, he appears to believe that lovemaking between men can "give spirit to a body that had no spirit". He reflects also from time to time that such a belief is simply ridiculous or foolish. The story of this novel moves around his relationships with two men. The first is his college room-mate, Charlie, to whom he makes love once, and who later marries Roberta and begets a small son, Jerry. The second is Henry, detached and inaccessible, whom Daniel picks up in a bar and to whom he makes love for twenty of the hundred and fifty pages of this book. Henry does not seem to want to repeat this experience, though his reluctance may be a function of Daniel's obsession. For after it Daniel falls terribly in love with the unknown Henry and becomes slightly deranged. Charlie and Roberta are more or less supportive. Everything is very unreal and unbearably significant.

The novel is called *The Catholic* because it travels between a Christian vision of the male body as the centre of our experience and Walt Whitman's celebration of his own and every body, "O my body . . . I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of the soul (and that they are the soul)." Whitman, proscribed by Daniel's Church, suggests to Daniel a possibility of sinless transcendence in sensuality. The Body of Christ is a more complex matter. It suffers and is pierced for our sins; in its mystical form it gathers up all human beings into one Body. More urgently for Daniel, it appears to have been made shameful in its nakedness by embarrassed nuns in his childhood.

What about Mère Ste Epiphane, in the parochial grammar school, saying that Christ's greatest suffering was not the flagellation, not the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion, but his having to hang on the cross naked, his body entirely exposed to everyone.

Christ died for us in an orgy of self-consciousness? Daniel finds it hard to connect the images of his religion to his feelings for Henry, and the reader in turn finds it hard to understand the significance of all the connections he is straining for.

The part played by the reader in *this* orgy is, in the end, integral to the success or failure of this work of art and the position of the reader presumably shifts considerably with his or her sexual predilections and religious upbringing. The reader, it seems to me, has two options here: to imagine *with* Daniel, to identify with him, or to watch coldly. The third option, the achievement of some kind of imaginative understanding of all this alien agony, is somehow precluded, partly by the book's virtues. I should here declare myself: I am a woman with an upbringing somewhere between the Quaker and the Lawrentian, a considerable distance from all this. It is possible for women to find men's bodies, described by other men, exciting or seductive. Here that is precluded by the narrator's attitude to women's bodies. He sees them as frail and delicate: when Daniel Francoeur approaches them they melt away like snow maidens. Yet metaphysically, women in this work are what they were to the whole Gnostic and Neoplatonic tradition, brute matter, not spiritual. "I didn't want Henry to be a woman because a woman's body could not be abstracted from her." It is possible that Daniel thinks a woman is the perfect fusion of sense and spirit, but I don't think so.

Lately, I've come across various discussions of "charm" in the relation between reader and novelist. Iris Murdoch sees it as a dangerous ploy of the artist to seduce the reader into collusion with his or her obsessions – true of great art as well as of pornography. I have always distrusted it, I always try to deconstruct it. Plante honourably eschews it, and as a reader one becomes desperate for it as the blood requires sugar. His bed-scene is remorseless – every drop of every exudation is detailed, every flicker of blankness, self-ridicule, "what on earth shall I do next?" laid out. It has a kind of dire comedy, but is swallowed again in self-consciousness. I felt a brief sympathy for Daniel when he began to wrestle with the ideas of pain and salvation, Henry and reality, etc for the last time, one sock off, one sock on. I was grateful for that sock. But although in the end I felt some admiration for him, I did not want to spend longer in his company.

Beneath the make-do and the mundane

Peter Kemp

BERYL BAINBRIDGE
Mum and Mr. Armitage
144pp. Duckworth. £7.95.
0715620800

Only one of the stories collected in *Mum and Mr Armitage* is actually set during the Second World War (two others occur just after it, and the remaining nine are located in a contemporary world of tower blocks and Leisure Centres). Over all of them, though, the atmosphere of that period seems to linger. Surrounded by a hinterland of menace, characters soldier on in a chirpy, chin-up way. Bouts of chummy cheeriness are favoured – so are make-do enjoyments: even at a modern street carnival, trestle-tables offer a nostalgic array of hand-knitted tea cosies, fudge and rag-dolls.

Homely old-fashioned Englishness is the element in which Beryl Bainbridge's imagination thrives. It's no accident that the collection's flimsiest work – a lightweight piece called "The Man Who Blew Away" – is a cosmopolitan fantasy unballasted by those gritty everyday oddities her fiction usually delights in digging out. The other tale of the supernatural included here is firmly grounded in the realm of Minis and municipal tennis-courts. For all its uncanny flourishings, it's basically a spirited account of that *petit bourgeois* combativeness that Bainbridge never tires of scrutinizing.

Edgy egotism keeps breaking through matiness in these stories. Though communal activities – nights out, parties, dances – are stressed, individuals constantly fall out of step. Scuffles for position and dissatisfaction with partners regularly disrupt social occasions. Rancour and revelry get snarled up with particular ferocity in the title story – the only one specially written for this collection and a vintage specimen of Bainbridge fiction. Crammed with the period lumber she loves – a stuffed stoat is used to administer a *coup de grâce* – it trains a beady eye on the eventual discomfiting of two practical jokers who've long been leaving a trail of humiliation and palpitation in their guffawing wake. Come-uppances often come up in these stories. Another exercise in blackly comic retaliation shows a man, asked to take the part of a clairvoyant at a local fête, suddenly seeing how he can use this to exact a long-deferred revenge.

Like most of the pieces here, that story moves through nicely calculated permutations to an emphatic concluding twist that fastens everything into place. Another hallmark of the stories is a fondness for comic effects achieved by highlighting rather lowly topographical reference – as with "the two middle-aged men from Wigan – they were always referred to as 'the lads' – who habitually wore shorts in the hotel". Catching background figures in an artless-sounding but epitomizing thumb-nail sketch is a technique that Bainbridge relishes. Her narratives are studded with mock-naïve cameos of characters like "The youth leader, who was called Sunday, and was an ethnic minority."

Sprightly in tone, the stories are bleak-ish in content. A jaunty observer of human quirks and absurdities, Bainbridge also penetrates to deeper warpings and aberrations. One of the baleful, retarded pranksters in the title story has, it is remarked, eyes that are "frightening, not for what they had seen, but for what they hadn't". A later piece takes this notion further as a sinister bland narrator, given to unappetizing locutions like "I've never been enamoured of fruit", not only reveals himself to be a loveless monster but, without realizing it, makes clear that he has unknowingly hounded his wife into a mental breakdown and her lover to his death. Another oblique murderer – who specializes in ushering forlorn tenants of a rented room to suicide by his malign mixture of sympathy and suggestion – appears in the final work, "Helpful O'Malley". At first playing on surface peculiarities, it seems, the stories then go on to delve deeper, often disinterring something particularly grisly in a final trenchant thrust. One of the narratives sets a cranky old woman's catch-phrase, "I don't like the sound of that", echoing comically through a spry account of her life, only to alter its timbre in the closing moments: as earth hits the lid of the woman's coffin her grand-daughter shiveringly reflects, "I didn't like the sound of it".

Terminal graveness of this kind opens up in a number of these lively stories. Solitaries snuff it in a bed-sitter filled with gas fumes; one man shoots himself with the revolver he's kept as a war-souvenir; another expires during a performance of *Peter Pan*, just as Tinkerbell is being resuscitated by the audience's applause. Usually, though, it's more mundane glumness that comes in for attention: long-harboured domestic grudges, reined-in resentments between friends, routine social callousness. "Life wasn't all roses" is the last line of one of these stories. With mocking nonchalance, its thornier aspects are pressed home in all of them.

Changing in the cupboard

Anne Haverty

ANABEL DONALD
Poor Dear Charlotte
256pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £8.95.
0340360321

One of the most widely held suppositions about the novel is that in the course of it, a change must take place in the protagonist. Anabel Donald seems to have grasped this principle – she deftly moves her's from A to C at least. We find twenty-seven-year-old Charlotte as a staid and scared teacher of English at Ashcombe School for Girls, facing spinsterhood and, at best, a headmistress-ship by the time she is forty; we leave her in mid-Atlantic on her way to America, land of the free, her life stretching ahead "like a Grand Canyon of opportunity".

The cornerstone on which this transformation rests, though, is too unlikely a psychological peculiarity. Charlotte is frightened of men the way some people are of spiders, with "a consuming fear that paralysed and incapacitated her". The author is not really interested in manifestations of hysteria, however, and this device, proving dramatically unproductive, is abandoned early on. Charlotte sets off on a school cruise to Russia and is necessarily thrown into the company of the two men included in the bevy of girls and mistresses. Over a couple of drinks in mid-Baltic, the bohemian middle-aged art teacher, Nicholas, talks her through her problems, thus leaving her a prey to the welcome attentions of the philandering new headmaster; for Charlotte is now positively lustful in her innocent way.

Disappointingly, Russia too is soon disposed of. It's a grey place, the soldiers have guns, the Intourist guide has eyes like steamed gooseberries and the food is bad. That is all we learn, since pretty Charlotte is newly busy with her headmaster and her own troubled psychology. We must take this last on trust – she seems quite well-adjusted in the capable way of school-mistresses. But Charlotte's emotions have been in cold storage since her unhappy adolescence as a middle-class semi-orphan, a time enlivened only by three tiredly picturesque maiden aunts who live in a run-down Irish castle, sometimes use odd Irish locutions and wear the requisite odd clothes. Like the other characters, their idiosyncracies are fulsomely described but as is usual with such aunts, they are difficult to tell apart.

Back at Ashcombe for the autumn term, an amorous incident involving Charlotte and her headmaster takes place in a stationery cupboard and Charlotte resigns when it is found out. That she is well out of the stultifying world of the staff-room is convincingly put across, and we follow her to London, where she becomes a high-minded assistant in her brother's cross record company and lays the ghosts of her cold-hearted parents. The tone is lively and not unfunny but this second half of the book is rather unfocused; the tension has been spent since before Stockholm.

We know that Charlotte is to be admired, because she is provided with a kind of *doppelgänger* in the shape of a supporting character called Sophie Preston. This plump, hapless schoolgirl who comes to grief is a version of what Charlotte might have been. Poor Sophie also has unloving parents and despite Charlotte's schoolmistressy attentions, she eats too much, takes drugs and finally overdoses. It would never happen to Charlotte. Since losing her inconvincing phobia, she is safe. Though we leave her winging her way to Phoenix, Arizona, her plan is to come back to another job in a country school. *Plus ça change.*

Fetial

Engines cut out, thick snow dumbed harmonious
doves numbed in frozen postures of flight and we
found in the eerie top-bright morning
rhubarb leaves crusting the ice-whorled window.

Those at the bank and the grocer's are that peculiar fetial
brand of perniciousness which wars and cold climates produce.

PETER READING

The travelling process

Gabriel Josipovici

LEONARDO SCIASCIA
The Wine-Dark Sea
Translated by Avril Bardoni
142pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £8.95.
0856355569

Civil Engineer Bianchi has been given the wrong advice. He's been told to take the night *diretto* from Rome to Sicily and to reserve a seat or he'll be standing in the corridor for the whole journey. In fact the reserved compartments are nearly always full while the others are largely empty; so Bianchi finds himself stuck with three adults and two children. Two of the adults, teachers, are the parents, the other is a girl of twenty from the same Sicilian town, travelling with them. The two little boys fight, swear, complain, smear dirty hands all over the adults, and generally make life hell. But the parents can't help being proud of them; especially of Nene, the youngest:

> "My pet", said the father, "you have ruined Papa's shirt."
> "I want some more mortadella", said Nene.
> "Mention mortadella once more, and the marshall of the carabinieri will come and arrest you", threatened his father.
> "I won't mention it; I'll eat it", said Nene, skirting skilfully round the veto.
> "He's as sharp as a razor", said his father proudly.

Though he realizes he's unlikely to get any sleep, the engineer, a bachelor, is drawn to the child, as he is to the young woman. Alone in the corridor they exchange a few words and the possibility of their meeting again grows. As the boat train crosses the straits of Messina in the early morning the father exclaims in wonder at the sea: "Where else would you see anything like this?"

> "It looks like wine", said Nene.
> "Wine?" repeated his father, perplexed. "What on earth's the matter with the child's eyesight? He doesn't seem to be able to tell one colour from another. Does the sea look wine-coloured to anybody else?"

Bianchi feels sure he's come across the expression somewhere before, but can't place it. The child is confident: "To me it looks like wine." Bianchi acknowledges that literally it certainly doesn't, yet "the child has stumbled on to something. Perhaps it's the effect, almost like the effect of wine, which a sea like this produces." But the thought, like everything else on this journey, leads to nothing. Once the family have left the train at their destination he slumps back and sleep engulfs him. Just before he loses consciousness he sees in his mind's eye the face of the man who advised him to take that particular train, and the face wears a satisfied and sadistic expression. "Lord", thinks Bianchi, "what a trip!"

It is practically impossible to summarize Leonardo Sciascia because his books are so pared-down already, because, as in this last paragraph, he can change direction with so little effort, and because the narrator never tells the reader what to think. Nene's remark drops out of Bianchi's consciousness, as does his sense of the girl's presence. Will either ever surface again? If they do, will he think of Homer, propose to the girl? Sciascia is not interested in resolutions. Not because he wishes to remain neutral but on the contrary, because he wants so passionately to involve the reader, and also because for him there is a certain aesthetic satisfaction to be derived from the making of an object which is ultimately resistant to explanation. In "Trial by Violence", a story more like his novels than the title story, a series of horrific murders takes place in the Bergamesque countryside in the 1870s. The police finally arrest a man who, on purely circumstantial evidence, looks like the culprit. At his trial, he appears to give himself away on two occasions, but the prosecution fails to notice. However, the famous phrenologist, Lombroso, is called in, and his ludicrous but (in the eyes of the authorities) damning account of the criminal propensities of the accused and his family as revealed by the shapes of their heads, leads to the man's being convicted for life. We do not know if he was guilty or not. Neither, presumably, does Sciascia. Like all human affairs, this one is confused and presents us with both too much and too little information. Yet had we been told at the end either that he was or was not guilty we would soon have forgotten the whole incident, as we forget every detective story as soon as the last page is turned. Here, on the other hand, as with Valéry's dancer, the lack of conclusion sends us back again and again over the process. As we do so we learn something of the irrationality and violence of men and institutions, which has not changed since 1870.

Not changed, above all, in Sicily. But though Sciascia writes almost exclusively about his native island and its sons, it would be quite wrong to see him as a regional writer. Of course he is too good an artist ever to use a specific incident as an allegory or symbol of the human condition; but by looking hard at the object and finding a style answerable to it he does tell us something about all men everywhere. And though there are few redeeming features in the stories he recounts, it is the quality of the vision, the clarity of the style, which provide the surprising feeling of hope that is present in his work.

He is not a natural short-story writer like Borges or Malamud. Though his novels rarely exceed 130 pages I suspect he needs that extra little bit of room to manoeuvre, precisely because for him a work of fiction is a made object more than a story told. What we have here, apart from the wonderful title story, is more like a series of brilliant exercises: stories told entirely in dialogue; stories told entirely through documents; stories dug out of old books and contemporary news items, such as the removal of Stalin's body from the mausoleum or the setting up of the anti-mafia commission. But his is a unique voice (and his tautness is particularly remarkable when one thinks how Italian literature has been dominated by the verbose and the sentimental in the past century); Carcanet are to be congratulated on their determination to make all his work – and there is a great deal of it – available to an English-speaking audience. The present well-translated collection is an ideal introduction for anyone who hasn't yet come across one of the major writers of the age.

"Ide Collar" (1922), a platinum print by Paul Outerbridge, reproduced in Art at Auction: The year at Sotheby's, 1984–85 *(416pp. Sotheby's. £25. 0 85667 303 X). The print fetched $20,900 (£16,328).*

Destructive appetites, saving violence

Adam Mars-Jones

ALBERTO MORAVIA
Erotic Tales
Translated by Tim Parks
184pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.50.
043628720X

The Italian title of Alberto Moravia's new book of stories has no pretensions to eroticism: it translates as *The Thing And Other Stories*. The translator, or whoever it was that came up with the more selling title, can't altogether be blamed. There is in many of these stories a heavy sexual preoccupation, though Moravia can be cleared of any charge of seeking to provoke undue enjoyment.

"The Thing", once the title story and still in first place, shows Moravia at his most lurid and trivial. It portrays the relationship between two women called Diana and Margherita. Here's Margherita:

> She was standing under the portico of the villa with her legs apart, her hands on her hips. Tall and thickly built with a chequered shirt, big-buckled belt, white polo pants and black boots; I don't know why – perhaps it was her arrogant pose – but she reminded me of Diana's father that time we saw him in the country on his farm. I looked her in the face. Under the round mass of dark, kinky hair, her unusually low forehead came down like a helmet on two small, sunken and penetrating eyes. The tiny snub nose and pouting but thin-lipped mouth made me think of the snout of certain large apes. In short, she was a giantess, a female freestyle wrestler, the kind you see on television grabbing each other's hair, kicking each other in the mouth, bouncing with both feet on the stomach of their opponents.

Wow. An arrogantly posing freestyle wrestler with strong overtones of ape and of her own dear Dad. It's not hard to work out what Diana sees in her.

The reader waits in vain for this preposterous fantasy to be subverted – for a voice like Alasdair Gray's narrator in *1982, Janine* to silence imaginary objections with "Shut up . . . there must be at least ONE lesbian like this in the world." Not a bit of it. It turns out that Margherita, above and beyond her physical appeal, has a specific technique for binding Diana to her: she forces Diana to pleasure a beautiful blond pony.

In theory, "The Thing" is saved from offensiveness by its being narrated by another gay woman, Ludovica, who is telling the story in a letter to her absent lover Nora: "Yes, Diana and her girlfriend had got together not to love each other like we do, no, but to adore in the pony the eternal phallus, symbol of degradation and slavery." "The Thing" contains good lesbians as well as bad ones, so it must be a balanced piece of work, right? Well, no. Quite apart from the second-person narrative showing an ineptness startling in so experienced a writer ("Your mother, an attractive, worldly widow . . ." and so on), the descriptions of non-perverse love-making have a queasy tone that can't entirely be the translator's contribution: thighs close convulsively on cheeks like traps of muscular flesh, people tuck into love food.

But what shows "The Thing" up as a piece of insulting ludicrousness is its final paragraph. Margherita takes a shine to Ludovica, seeing in her a winning addition to the perverted gymkhana. She suggests that Ludovica replace Diana. Ludovica refuses. But as the coda of her letter admits, the offer had its charms. "I was almost tempted to give in to her. I would have done so precisely because she was repugnant, because I did find her, as you put it, horrendous, because she did want me to take Diana's place . . .". The *status quo* is comfortably reinstated, since the good lesbian turns out to have her own niggling weakness for pony-worship.

Moravia doesn't explore sexuality so much as go in for perfunctory diagnostics. Only one story treats erotic life in anything approaching three dimensions, and that is "The Belt". A woman wakes up one morning still smarting from a social humiliation inflicted on her by her husband the night before. She strikes him and taunts him, aware that she is somehow leading him on to beat her with his belt, originally a present to him from her, with a tender inscription on its buckle. On previous occasions when he has whipped her with the belt, she has let out a thin querulous moan quite at odds with her normal voice: "Even while I'm making it this sound amazes me because I sense in it a whole part of myself that I feel I don't know." This morning, though, her husband resists her provocations.

In turn that morning she pays calls on her mother, her father, and a mechanic with whom she has had an intermittent affair. She needles them all, trying to provoke them to some definitive act. This destructive pattern becomes human when she describes how her father once saved her from drowning: since she was hanging on to his neck so tightly that she was endangering them both, he had to knock her out with a punch before he could do any life-saving. That punch thereafter symbolizes for her saving violence, an outrage within a disaster which makes survival possible. All morning she tries to detonate a similar discharge.

Defeated, she returns home, and finds that her husband has hung the belt on a nail by the bed. She finds this at first terrifying, then purely repugnant. It occurs to her it may be no more than an affectionate warning; and finally she finds it comforting, since now that the belt's status has in some way been dramatized, she and her husband can at least talk about it over lunch. For once, Moravia presents sexual behaviour not as pure negative appetite but as a complex symbolic negotiation, in which apparently destructive impulses may constitute a kind of victory.

Montaigne, in his essay prompted by some lines of Virgil, proposes that for moderation's sake an old man should dwell on lascivious thoughts and cultivate sexual obsessiveness, raking through the ashes for whatever heat remains – just as a young man should train himself away from having a one-track mind. Moravia, now well on in his seventies, may be attempting a similar project by focusing so narrowly on erotic life; but the results, however revivifying to the writer, are likely to strike the reader as both morbid and facile.

In council and chancery

Lauro Martines

ROBERT BLACK
Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance
367pp. Cambridge University Press. £32.50.
0521250161
H. C. BUTTERS
Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence 1502–1519
350pp. Oxford: Clarendon. £27.50.
0198225938

Fifteenth-century Florence, a proud and covetous city, was generous in assigning offices and honours to foreign literary intellectuals. A line of non-Florentines, from Salutati to Scala, won appointments to the republic's most important secretarial post, the chancellorship, an office for men schooled in classical Latin eloquence. Their duties were to compose state letters, draft instructions to Florentine ambassadors, and to keep a close record of political debate in the top councils of government. With a sharp eye for its image abroad, Florence reserved the chancellorship for eminent rhetoricians and publicists – ie, humanists. One of these, Benedetto Accolti, the subject of Robert Black's *specimen eruditionis*, held the office from 1458 to his death in 1465. But unlike his predecessors, he also professed and practised law.

Dr Black's admirable study has two parts. The first deals with the Accolti family background, with the place of Arezzo – Accolti's native city – in the fortunes of Italian humanism, and with the Florentine chancellorship. The second part turns to Accolti's secretarial career and his literary works. In a field glittering with administrative and humanistic talent, Accolti stood out. He reformed and sharpened chancery functions, brought order to the tasks of foreign correspondence and minute taking, improved the Latin grammar of the work that issued from his office, introduced a loftier rhetorical style, and when need arose, could make brilliant extempore Latin orations. In line with the larger ambitions of any such office holder, he rounded off his labours with two humanistic writings: an untitled *Dialogus* on the question of the moderns versus the ancients, and a history of the first crusade (*De bello a christianis contra barbaros gesto pro Christi sepulcro et Iudea recuperandis*), which Black rightly puts in the context of a fifteenth-century fashion for writings on the Near East.

In striving to take the measure of Accolti's secretarial performance, the author presents a pointed and reliable history of the chancellorship, even if he argues, rather too lengthily, that the office was meant to stand above political faction. No one has ever disputed this. The same ideal applied to all Florentine magistracies. Yet in practice, meanesses, faction, patronage and intrigue did enter into the election of chancellors; and no man in the office could afford to ignore those who shaped the politics of Florentine oligarchy. Accolti did not do so, for, as Black notes, he dedicated his two works in a sycophantic manner to Cosimo and Piero de' Medici. Humanist chancellors were propagandists not only for the Renaissance city but also for its political magnates.

This is not to say that the effects of patronage and faction necessarily vitiated the literary productions of chancellors. Benedetto Accolti's *Dialogus*, which teems with contemporary observation, is most likely the first modern discussion of that famous topic, "the quarrel between the ancients and moderns". And the author finds that although *De bello* invents scenes and speeches in typical humanist fashion, it also exhibits historical acumen and is an eloquent warning to contemporaries about the rising menace of the Ottoman Turks. Black's findings are based on painstaking archival work and close textual analysis.

Into this wealth H. C. Butters has also dipped, in preparing his *Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence, 1502–1519*. The years of the title mark a time of anguished political change: the Medici had been cast out of the city (1494), the republic had been revivified, the chief office of state became a lifetime dignity in 1502 and its occupant, Piero Soderini, worked to defend the republic until 1512, when Medicean henchmen managed to seize power. Their seizure was consolidated the following year, when Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X. Henceforth, with the exception of a turbulent revolutionary interlude (1527–1530), the Medici were permanently to rule Florence.

Butters goes over the political changes of his eighteen-year period with a fine-toothed comb. His polemical preface tells us why: he is writing in the narrative mode, as opposed to the more analytical and social-structural mode of recent work on Florence. Furthermore, since the eighteen years have often been examined in detail, he is driven to find that the writings of earlier historians of the period are "oversimple". His leading stratagem is to challenge the claims – often by exaggerating them – of earlier generalization. As a result, his conclusions are necessarily a labour of adjustment and minor alteration. Thus, he contends that the main political struggle in Florence around 1500 was not between patricians and bourgeoisie (*popolani*); it was a tug of war among a variety of rival groups and factions. The opposition to Piero Soderini was not confined to the patriciate; men from the middle ranks also resisted him. The Great Council – the linchpin of "popular" government between 1495 and 1512 – had more than the acclaim of the *popolani*; many patricians also supported it. Finally, in the years from 1512 to 1519, the controls of Medicean government were far from absolute; often enough negative votes were cast in councils and the Medici were compelled to keep in mind the needs of the patriciate. They were not, however, mindful enough, and anger spread through the old ruling class.

Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence is a valuable study, even if its meticulous scholarship has missed pertinent work by Guido Pampaloni and Hidetoshi Hoshino. And it is an odd lapse to assert repeatedly that the war office (the *Dieci*) was responsible for foreign policy, when in fact this job belonged to the *Signoria*, which of course shared it in wartime with the *Dieci*. But the book's most disturbing feature is, indeed, its mode: old-line political narrative largely divorced from economic and social-structural considerations. By his unflinching focus on individuals, Butters verges on transforming politics into personalities, animosities and opportunism. Much of the drama of Florentine politics was obviously in these. It is one thing to tell their story, however, and something else to highlight them at the expense of reflection on major issues, such as the economic and social effects of the city's partisan tax system, the question of strict oligarchy versus some kind of middle-class government, the meaning of Medicean authoritarianism for the large scope of Florentine interests, and the matter of the right to hold public office in a place where the dominant political values implied that you had no sufficient honour or humanity unless you were so privileged.

The value of Butters's book arises from the scale of its minute factual documentation. But then, paradoxically, its fierce (English?) empiricism threatens the achievement by continually cavilling at its own documentary sources and by both relying on, and continually sniping at, the larger constructions of other historians. Isn't this tack too easy? In one sense, to be sure, no picture of things can ever be detailed or fine enough. Reality is always more complex. Yet it is also true that to over-refine things in historical analysis is to veer away from generalization, and this risks turning historical reality into parts so small that meaning itself is fragmented, distorted, or lost.

That's entertainment?

Filippo Donini

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI il giovane
La fiera
Edited by Uberto Limentani
161pp. Florence: Olschki. L22,000.

Just as the great Napoleon was followed by "Napoléon le petit", who was his nephew, so the great Michelangelo Buonarroti had a nephew who bore the same name and became famous as a poet and playwright (1568–1642). He is known traditionally in Italy as Michelangelo Buonarroti *il giovane* but *il piccolo* would be no doubt more appropriate. His fame rests on some satires and *capitoli*, and on two plays, *Tancia* and *La fiera*. The latter was performed in 1619 at the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, but the author never published it, although he kept working on it for thirty-five years, transforming an original text suitable for a performance on a single evening into a giant play of 33,000 lines divided into five *Giornate* of five acts each. This monstrous version found posthumous publishers in 1726 and 1860, and long remained the only text by which to judge Buonarroti's so-called masterpiece.

Now Uberto Limentani, a well-known seventeenth-century specialist, has found in the Medicean Library in Florence the original text of *La fiera*, the one, that is, which was performed in 1619, complete with stage directions and descriptions of some of the characters' costumes. It exists in three copies, which were obviously meant for the actors' use; but they are far from being exact copies, as each of them shows independent additions, cancellations and variants. Professor Limentani has collated the three copies with scrupulous philological care and established a text of some 3,600 lines, an acceptable length for a Carnival performance relieved with music and dances. An introduction of thirty pages and numerous notes, referring mainly to the ways in which the present relatively succinct text was expanded into the final gigantic one, complete the critical apparatus.

Although Limentani is not blind to the artistic inadequacies of Buonarroti (whom he prefers to call an "indefatigable versifier" rather than a poet) and openly condemns the prolixity and lack of vitality of several parts of *La fiera*, he is perhaps a little too indulgent in regard of some of the dramatist's faults. I doubt whether many readers of *La fiera* will agree with his appreciation of the abstract characters (the personifications of Commerce, Industry, Poverty, Mendacity, etc) or his statement that they are "the quintessence of reality"; and I am surprised that he does not condemn Buonarroti's jesuitical recantation of his former praise of Galileo, and his justification of telling lies "when it is useful". And to describe a scene in which a mother teaches her daughter how to be a coquette, as "un gioiello di brio e di naturalezza" (a gem of vivacity and naturalness) seems to be going a little far.

But these are minor flaws, negligible when set alongside the merit of having rescued and edited with such exemplary acumen an important text that had been lost for nearly four centuries. Limentani's work has another merit, too. Traditionally, and starting with the great critic Giuseppe Baretti, Buonarroti's work was considered to be "a lexicographer's hobby". The fact that Buonarroti had been a keen contributor to the great *Vocabolario della Crusca* led Baretti and his followers to take for granted that his aim in writing was to transcribe and preserve the language of the people, and they saw in *La fiera* only a repository of curious archaisms. Limentani does not deny Buonarroti's interest in such language but he maintains that the dramatist's intention was chiefly satirical: he wanted to teach his audience a lesson on the damage caused by dishonesty and especially by bad administration. In accordance with his good-natured temperament, and because he detested any form of haughtiness or pomposity, he chose to express his views in a comedy rather than a treatise. But, compatibly with his principal aim, he also wanted to amuse his audience; we must not forget that the comedy was conceived as a court entertainment, with a large element of music and choreography.

Whether *La fiera* is enjoyable to read today is another question. Its didactic character is too often off-putting, and the "indefatigable versifier" does not know when to stop. Contemporary Italian readers may find a passage about the time spent in preventive detention astonishingly relevant and prophetic, but that is hardly enough. Instead of the traditional view of Buonarroti as "more a lexicographer than an artist" we are now confronted with a well-meaning satirist whom, alas, the Muses did not much favour. His laudable intention: "dir mal del male in util delle genti" (to speak ill of evil in order to help people) is expressed in one of the most cacophonous lines in all Italian literature.

In practice

J. N. Stephens

KATHARINE PARK
Doctors and Medicine in Early Renaissance Florence
298pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £30.70.
0691083738

This book is concerned with what may be called the "social world" of Florentine doctors in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The phrase was one employed by Lauro Martines in his study of the Florentine humanists, where he sought to chart their rôle in society by reference to their wealth, political position and relations with the patriciate. Katharine Park takes the same approach to the doctors, except that she is also concerned necessarily with the institutional position of a trade-community and has to cross the frontier into the history of medicine, of guilds and of society. One advantage of this is that we obtain a general account of doctors in Florence and data about their numbers, wealth, careers and literary culture. But no one of these areas can be exhaustively described. The history of medical practice and of hospitals is neglected (though the surviving archives of the Florentine hospital of Santa Maria Nuova covet both); and that of guilds traversed. Doctors are here defined as physicians, surgeons and "empirics" (practitioners with less formal training), which corresponds to the definition found in contemporary guild statutes.

Dr Park insists on the corporate solidarity of doctors in their guild. However, as she goes on to explain, they had no guild of their own; they were a part of the guild of doctors, apothecaries, grocers and many smaller groups such as barbers, grave-diggers and stationers – trades which do not fall within the compass of the book. So the doctors here are in limbo, severed from both the other medical and the non-medical members of their own guild. To what extent, one wants to know, did the work of the less theoretical "empirics" resemble that of their fellow guildsmen, the barbers, and how far were they recruited from the latter?

Nevertheless, the author's approach enables her to provide some revealing glimpses of the numbers and background of Florentine doctors from *c*1350 to *c*1450. The main manuscript sources she has used are four volumes of matriculation records of the guild, and the details of thirty-eight doctors who appear in the Florentine tax records of 1427. These have been supplemented by miscellaneous letters, family memorials, laws covering the appointment of communal doctors, earlier tax records and the relatively few writings of doctors themselves. On this basis Park builds a general picture of the profession: of its official character, the kinds of work it did, its wealth and cultural activities. She supports such earlier findings as that the profession had a strong sense of corporate identity; that Italian doctors provided a comprehensive service for the middling folk and the poor; and that immigrants to Florence often hailed from the prosperous classes of dependent communities.

Park's most surprising discovery is that "foreigners" came to dominate the medical profession in Florence by the fifteenth century, a fact she explains partly by D. Herlihy's hypothesis that urban fertility in Italy was low and partly by the cultural attractions of Florence. Another reason might be that Florence then became an intellectual dependency of the medical centres of Padua and Bologna. The process coincides with the establishment of Florence's university and could be explained by the wish to purchase talent from the established Italian universities.

A great little power

John Carswell

JAMES OPIE
Britains Toy Soldiers 1893–1932
192pp. Gollancz. £29.95.
0575037415

It may well be that Messrs Britains are the greatest manufacturers of toy soldiers the world has ever known. In this handsome, evocative and beautifully illustrated book, James Opie calculates that during the seventy years or so of their metallic operation (this book covers only the first forty in detail) they produced one thousand million men: a stark billion of horse, foot and supporting arms of almost every British regiment and foreign army, Royal Fusiliers, Green Howards, Uruguayan Infantry, Evzones and Cameronians, Egyptian Cavalry and the 5th Royal Irish Lancers. In my time they used to come at one shilling and eight pence a box containing eight foot or five horse.

Many hundreds of Britains' billion passed through my hands as a child when I eagerly tore them from their boxes to campaign round the Christmas Tree. I would have done better to provide for my old age by leaving them in their boxes where today, never having seen a shot fired, they would fetch at auction up to a thousand times what was paid for them. I speak the literal truth. My five Argentinian Cavalry (I still have two, but so battered and repainted as to be all but worthless) would, I find, be worth £240 today, if boxed and in pristine condition. And I'm sure I had at least three boxes of yellow-jacketed Evzones, today worth £210. Their original price: five shillings.

This is very much a book for collectors with longish purses. All finer points are here – which horses in which series are dated or undated; pigeon-chested and closed-elbow varieties; open-eared horses, plug-headed fusiliers, slotted-arm bandsmen. Terminology is explained, the rare is distinguished from the relatively commonplace.

The manufacture of model soldiers is of course a very ancient one. The figures in the terracotta army discovered at Sian date from many years before Christ. They are slightly bigger than life-size, but warriors the same size as those made by Messrs Britains, namely about a thirtieth the height of a normal man, are frequent in antiquity and have been ever since. Chessmen are model soldiers subject to a peculiar form of battle-drill. So are draughtsmen. One might even include conkers. But not ninepins, because they can't be thought of as fighting back.

Britains began making soldiers out of a lead amalgam (I have been told it was originally scrap type-metal) in the significant year 1893, midway between the Golden and Diamond Jubilees, the zenith of British imperial glory. They quickly captured the British market from German imports, which till then had dominated it, and achieved a lasting ascendancy. The story should be a case study in business schools. The soldiers were entirely hand-made and hand-painted. The key to success was the innovation of making them hollow in the ingenious hollow-casting mould invented by William Britain. Till then soldiers had been solid, so Britains' came out at half the price. True, they were breakable, as many a match-stick surgeon will know, but they were quite robust enough to last for ever, with the modest amount of care they rarely received.

This innovation was supported by close attention to design, painting and marketing to secure maximum economy combined with product range – if one box did not catch the boy's imagination, another would. There were indeed hundreds, perhaps thousands of basic models produced over the years, but with proper painting the same design would do duty for many different regiments and armies. The models all have a family resemblance and it is possible to tell a Britains figure at a glance – with its pose pitched happily between the formal and the life-like: convincing for parade, yet with a dog-like appeal for a campaign as well. Much careful research went into uniforms, weapons and accoutrements, and the painting (all done by female hands) was neat and carefully controlled but in no sense minute or exact. Standards of inspection were high, with the result that defective pieces are now valued as rarities.

The market was continuously studied, with new lines such as Jameson's raiders and Japanese infantry coming out at just the right times, but nothing can alter the fact that Britains' army belongs to the days of Jubilee and Durbar which ended with 1914 – and even then a Guards officer in full dress with bearskin observing the fall of shot through field glasses must have been rarely seen. It is significant that neither world war made much difference to Britains' offerings, and like the country that produced and loved them, the little soldiers grew more and more nostalgic (and expensive) until, with the arrival of the swinging sixties, they surrendered to the forces of plastic and became part of the national heritage.

The forces of plastic are vivid, various and modern, with few pretensions to parade-ground dignity. They are cheap and in every sense light-weight, and I doubt if they capture the imagination on acquisition or the sense of treasure in keeping that their metal predecessors elicited. They occupy only a modest corner of the modern world of toys. Britains' army reflected, and in its own world was, a great power.

Images from a dye packet (circa 1940) and a showcard (circa 1935); they are reproduced from Robert Opie's Rule Britannia: Trading on the British Image *(159pp. Viking. £12.95. 0670807133).*

At his bidding

Peter Swinnerton-Dyer

JOHN CLAY
Culbertson: The man who made contract bridge
242pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0297784366

Ely Culbertson's life was a theatrical production, with himself in the leading role; he would be a natural subject for a biography, but for one thing. In such a case, what the reader wants is not the facts but the legend, and the legend is grippingly presented in Culbertson's autobiography, *Strange Lives of One Man*. John Clay has done a sound professional job, and has written a fascinating book; but he cannot compete with inspiration.

Culbertson's father was a petroleum engineer from Pennsylvania, who emigrated to Southern Russia in 1880, made his fortune in the new oilfields in the Caucasus and married into the local aristocracy. Ely was a precocious child, given his head too much and growing up, like so many of his generation in the upper classes, under the influence of the literature of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Moved by a mixture of idealism, the zest for danger which stayed with him all his life, and the disgust which an American citizen (even one who had never seen America) had a duty to feel towards the régime of pre-revolutionary Russia, he became involved with the Social Revolutionary Party. In due course he was picked up by the police. Only his American passport saved him from being shot; that gave his mother's family time to use their influence in St Petersburg, and he was released on condition that he left Russia at once.

After a brief period in Europe, he went to Yale, sustained by a comfortable income from his father. There he was a drop-out, and he continued to lead a wastrel life. In the ordinary course of events he would have lived and died a person of no importance, his talents wasted for lack of application. What changed this was the Russian Revolution, which by 1920 had abolished his income and that of his parents – who had themselves taken refuge in America. Suddenly Ely had to earn a living.

He was clearly unsuited to any regular occupation. He recognized in himself only one usable talent: skill at cards. From his youth he had been entranced by *vint*, a Russian game similar to auction bridge but much more complicated; and he could transfer those skills to auction. So he became a professional card-player – among whom he was perhaps the only one who played by method rather than by inspiration. He had two strokes of luck. First, he fell in love with and married Josephine Dillon, a young widow who was one the best auction players in New York. And then, soon afterwards, Harold Vanderbilt and some of his friends invented contract bridge.

If one man could be the unchallenged expert at the new game, he could make a fortune, and all the leading names of auction bridge hoped to transfer their reputations to contract. In this Culbertson had great advantages. He was a superb showman, with inexhaustible energy, and he had more systematic ideas about bidding than any of his rivals. Moreover, primacy would be decided by success in tournaments and challenge matches, and in his wife he had a first-class partner with whom he had a superb understanding. He and his team won a series of well-publicized matches, and he took pains to rub salt into his rivals' wounds. Needled beyond endurance, they did the most foolish thing possible; they came together to form the "Official System", cobbled together from fragments of their individual methods. Instantly Culbertson challenged them to a match. They nominated their two best individual players, Lenz and Jacoby. If Lenz had chosen the right partner, he might well have won; but Jacoby's style, and in particular his use of "psychic" bids, jarred utterly on Lenz. The match was a massacre; two-thirds of the way through, Jacoby stormed out in rage and had to be replaced by a more suitable but less distinguished partner.

The story should end here. Culbertson was on top of the bridge world, and making money faster than even he could spend it. And for a few years it stayed that way. But in 1937, in the first World Championship, he faced for the first time a truly scientific system. Crushed now as in the past he had crushed others, he lost his zest for the game. His wife, who had been crucial to his success, left him. This is one of those stories which do not have a happy ending.

Shooting a li

Antony Atha

DAVID PROFUMO and GRAHAM SWIFT (Editors)
The Magic Wheel: An anthology of fishing literature
460pp. Heinemann. £15. (Picador. Paper £4.95.)
0330290072 X (Picador)
0434753319 (Heinemann)
ROBIN ARMSTRONG
The Painted Stream: A river warden's life
159pp. Dent. £12.95.
0460047027
DEREK MILLS
The Fishing Here is Great
153pp. Collins/Willow £12.95.
0002181770
TIMOTHY BENN
The (Almost) Compleat Angler: Or proof that there is more to fishing than just catching fish
96pp. Gollancz. £6.95.
057503713 X

Anyone looking for a stocking-filler fishing relative this Christmas is in luck: one of these books would make the most welcome present. Top of the list must come *Magic Wheel*, a fishing anthology compiled by David Profumo and Graham Swift. The title is taken from *The Taking of the Salmon*, poem by Thomas Todd Stoddart, the writer and angler best known for his reply when a successful boyhood friend later in life what he was doing with his "Doing? *Doing*? Mon . . . I'm an ang Unlike most sporting anthologies this arranged chronologically and you can century at a time. The editors have many of the jewels that you would find fishing anthologies; J.W. Hills's big tro instance, is missing. But they have point of including extracts from many that one would not normally associate fishing – Alan Sillitoe and Virginia Woolf name two from the present century. In introduction, great play is made of Virginia Woolf's contribution, but I think that it originally written as a review of J.W. Hills's book *My Sporting Life*, rather than as a of Hills himself, and the words (and tho are more Hills than Woolf.

It was pleasing to discover from the that Oliver Henly, Isaak Walton's fishing panion, had obviously read Alfred D who was writing 150 years earlier; I Baron Munchausen told the tallest story since Jonah's adventures with the and Guy de Maupassant's *Two Friends* the saddest fishing story I have ever read book is full of such delights. In *A Sum* *the Test* J. W. Hills wrote that "we fish were possibly a foolish folk in that we sp trifles feelings which the wise reserve for important events". Perhaps we do, but feelings produce books like *The Magic W* then I, for one, am glad that this is so.

Robin Armstrong's *The Painted Stream* also thoroughly enjoyable. It is not fishing book at all, though its main theme and fishing. The author is a river warden the South-West Water Authority. He lives the banks of the River Walkham in Devon he writes of his life protecting the salmon sea trout of the south-west and the battle against the poachers. Many of the dents are related with a wonderfully touch; but the underlying message is rious and one can only applaud the author the South-West Water Authority for they have taken over the protection of rivers. The author is also a fine artist book is beautifully illustrated with his and sketches.

The final two books are rather *The Fishing Here is Great*, Derek Mills has old fishing postcards to illustrate many aspects of fishing. His text is wide-ranging includes that famous angling story, the the huge salmon in Norway by W. Davenport – which you will not find *Magic Wheel* – when sorrow "too deep words gains possession of me and I sit down gazing in blank despair at the water". Benn's *(Almost) Compleat Angler* touches licately on nearly all of the angler's tions. He has forgotten about of misfortunes, but it is a charming

Cullises without port

Christopher Reid

DAVID MABEY
The Guiltless Gourmet
208pp. Mitchell Beazley. £6.95.
ANTON MOSIMANN
Cuisine Naturelle
216pp. Macmillan. £14.95.
VICTOR GORDON
The English Cookbook
304pp. Cape. £12.50.
0224023004

"As chefs have ventured forth from the kitchen in search of better materials", Drew Smith tells us in his foreword to David Mabey's *The Guiltless Gourmet*, "a marked change has come over their menus, which is almost a morality." The distance by which it falls short of being a "morality" is never precisely measured, but two things become clear: Mabey's book is not intended to prod the conscience of the bon vivant on the matter of Third World famine, nor is the meat-eater likely to feel persuaded to reconsider his or her bestial habit. Guilt of another, more specialized kind is the point at issue here.

I am reminded of a piece of advertising copy on behalf of a firm of Midwestern beefsteak-purveyors in the *New Yorker*: "To thine own self . . . be *good*!" Emancipation from guilt can be big business. The cultivation of a diet in its own right, dressing it up as a question of (almost) morality makes the package twice as hard to resist.

Behind the tendentious title of Mabey's book, however, there stands a compilation of some 200 recipes whose humble purpose is no more than to promote the "trend towards lighter food, smaller quantities and greater artistry in the kitchen" that the author has identified as a recent and laudable phenomenon of French-influenced British cooking. All the recipes have been contributed by imaginative restaurateurs. They provide both daunting and inspiring reading. The method of cooking in each case is clearly presented and easy to follow on the page, but I expect that many of the ingredients required for the seafood, meat and game recipes in particular may prove off-puttingly expensive, while the cook under pressure of time is likely to feel that three pairs of hands and superhuman synchronization will be indispensable if certain dishes are not to flop.

Although a number of these flights of fancy may come across as menacingly rich, Mabey's ideological debt to the school of Nouvelle Cuisine remains evident. Anton Mosimann has taken the tenets of this school a significant stage futher, and the new sect he has founded lends its name to a book of his recipes entitled *Cuisine Naturelle*. Here again, the author's insistence on ethical superiority is an irritating distraction. "The general flavours of many foods", Mosimann declares in a passage where the exclusion of certain traditional ingredients is justified, "are more honest, more *real*, not overpowered by sauces made with alcohol." But why does he need to offer this assertion when to say that his dishes are healthier and taste attractively different would have been sufficient?

A reason for this may be self-consciousness on Mosimann's part about his status as a culinary evangelist. For he has set out to formulate a radically new cuisine from which such mainstays of the old barbarous cooking as butter, oil, cream and alcohol have been austerely eliminated. His ingenuity in contriving substitutes for the lubricants, sauces and dressings upon which his predecessors relied is utterly convincing and many of his recipes sound delicious. In following this course, however, he is very much a pioneer and prone, in consequence, to the pioneer's vice of dogmatic overstatement.

This circumstance could account, too, for the heavy emphasis placed by him on the presentation of food at the table. A number of Mosimann's dishes, as illustrated in the colour plates, look not so much cooked as designed. Obviously, one does not want food to be slopped all over the plate, but the result of too much fussing can be an absurd preciousness. What is the point of arranging a salmon terrine, for instance, to look like a Chinese brush-drawing, or a quail consommé in the manner of a Zen temple garden? If this were all Mosimann had to offer, he might become known as the man who put the kitsch into kitchen, but fortunately he also has the master chef's absolute command of his materials, a breath-taking inventiveness in applying them and the ability to set out his discoveries in terms that must be comprehensible to the lowliest acolyte.

Victor Gordon has also responded to a missionary vocation, his great plan being no less than the complete overhaul of English eating habits. Rather than looking abroad for his guidance, however, he has turned his attention towards native English cookery and indigenous foodstuffs to see what might be achieved through a process of revival and amplification. This is a Herculean task, and in *The English Cookbook* Gordon demonstrates that he has gone about it with admirable gusto.

Not everyone is likely to share his passion for junkets, for instance, and although I would go part of the way with him I would stop short of the cucumber junket which he proposes as a starter. Otherwise, many of his suggested improvements to standard English fare are perfectly acceptable, and even exciting. It is nice to see such dishes as liver and bacon, boiled mutton and rabbit pie being rescued from neglect, and Gordon's pleas on behalf of underrated ingredients like barley and beer are worth heeding.

Where he is less persuasive is in his rejection of foreign elements. Doctrinaire jingoism leads him at times into a fearful muddle, as when he allows the use of curry powder (good old Anglo-Indian stand-by), but bans those spices from which curry powder is made. His *Index Ciborum Prohibitorum* strikes me as not much more than an exercise in archness. More telling is the respect he shares with Mosimann for stocks and what he piously insists on calling "cullises". It is instructive to note the fundamental principles that unite these prophets of culinary factionalism – more interesting, I would suggest, than many of the faddish or reactionary gestures by which they seek to capture public acclaim.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Antony Atha is the editor of *A Scottish Naturalist: The sketches and notes of Charles St John*, 1982.
T. C. Barker's most recent book is *The Transport Contractors of Rye*, 1982.
Alan Bell's biography of Sydney Smith was published in 1980.
Craig Brown is the author of *The Marsh Marlowe Letters*, 1984.
Anthony Burgess's most recent novel, *The Kingdom of the Wicked*, was published earlier this year.
A. S. Byatt's most recent novel, *Still Life*, was published earlier this year.
Frances Cairncross is the author, with Hamish McRae, of *Capital City: London as a Financial Centre* which was published earlier this year.
John Carswell is Emeritus Secretary of the British Academy.
Rupert Christiansen's *Prima Donna* was published in 1984.
Thomas M. Disch's collections of poems include *ABCDEFG HIJKLM NPOQRST UVWXYZ*, 1981.
Filippo Donini was formerly Director of the Italian Institute in London.
Keir Elam is the author of *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 1980.
April FitzLyon's biography of Lorenzo da Ponte, originally published in 1956, was reissued as a paperback in 1983.
Kate Flint is a Fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford.
John Gledson is the author of *The Deceptive Realism of Machado de Assis: A dissenting view of "Dom Casmurro"*, 1984.
Anthony Hicks compiled the list of Handel's works in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.
Howard Jacobson's novel, *Peeping Tom*, 1984, was reissued in paperback earlier this year.
Gabriel Josipovici's new novel *Contre-Jour* will be published next February.
John Kerrigan is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge.
Hanif Kureishi's film, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, is currently on general release.
Mary Lefkowitz's *Women in Greek Myth* will be published in the spring.
Arthur Marshall's collections of essays and observations include *I'll Let You Know*, 1981.
Lauro Martines's *Society and History in English Renaissance Verse* was published earlier this year.
Roger Nichols is the author of *Messiaen*, 1975.
S. S. Prawer's *Heine's Jewish Comedy* has recently been published in paperback.
Christopher Reid's first collection of poems, *Pea Soup*, was published in 1982; his most recent collection, *Katerina Brac*, will be reviewed in the *TLS* shortly.
Oliver Reynolds's first collection of poems, *Skevington's Daughter*, will be reviewed in the *TLS* shortly.
Robin Robbins is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.
Clive Sinclair's most recent novel, *Blood Libels*, was published earlier this year.
Hilary Spurling's *Secrets of a Woman's Heart: The later life of I. Compton-Burnett 1920–1969* was published earlier this year.
Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer was formerly an international bridge player and represented England on many occasions.
J. N. Stephens is the author of *The Fall of the Florentine Republic 1512–30*, which was published in 1983.
Gary Taylor is Associate Editor of The Oxford Shakespeare.
Alice Thomas Ellis is the co-author of *Darling, You Shouldn't Have Gone To So Much Trouble*, 1980.
Gillian Tindall's books include *The Fields Beneath: The history of one London village*, 1977.
Thwaite has been a contributor to *Punch* for fifty years.
Alan Webster is Dean of St Paul's and the editor of *Julian of Norwich: A light in darkness*, 1980.

Meatless wheezes

Alice Thomas Ellis

KAY CANTER and DAPHNE SWANN
Entertaining with Cranks
Illustrated by John Lawrence
160pp. Dent. £12.95.
046004706 X

I am not mad about meat but my idea of a vegetarian meal is any old ordinary meal with the meat left out. Two veg with stuffing and bread sauce and cranberry jelly seems to me a perfectly adequate repast, but I know this view is frowned upon by serious vegetarians. I have never had a nut cutlet because the concept is associated in my mind with amber beads and men who wear socks under their sandals, but this is an ancient prejudice and unworthy of the free-thinking cook of today.

Entertaining with Cranks is a robustly produced vegetarian cookery book with nice large print that one can read through the steam without one's glasses, and is packed with meatless wheezes such as spinach and cheese pie, and pancakes stuffed with ratatouille (for no very clear reason I find the latter faintly off-putting) but there are plenty of old favourites, especially the country cheese and onion flan – rather aggressively nutritious with its wholemeal pastry but certainly very filling. Why is it that if you know a dish is going to do you good and is virtuously free of slaughtered creatures you tend to lose your appetite? Perhaps this is my own perversity. What is more disturbing is the quantity of ingredients required by some of the receipts. Faced by a list of anything up to thirty I close the book and bake a potato, although I am beginning to be tempted to essay a nut roast just to see what it tastes like.

I am a bit confused by the inclusion of salads and puddings in this book. Surely a salad is, by definition, a concoction of vegetables, unless it is one of those Scandinavian things with soused herring and smoked reindeer meat; or a salmagundy; and none of our puddings, not even Christmas pudding, has had any meat in for several centuries. Perhaps I covertly incline to the view, which I am sure the authors despise, that vegetarian meals must always emulate carnivorous meals, and a vegetarian cookery book should contain only simulations. The authors do not fall into this trap – although there's always that nut roast. And I don't believe you can make mayonnaise by hand using a *whole* egg.

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A Taste of India, the latest cookery book by Madhur Jaffrey (255pp. Pavilion. £14.95. 0 907516 88 2), sets Indian food in a regional context. Ms Jaffrey provides introductions to the cuisine of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kashmir, Gujarat and five other regions, followed by a selection of recipes. There is also a chapter on basic recipes, several pages of general notes on Indian food and a recipe index.